"Take a letter....."

by JACK GARRETT

PUTTING PERSUASIVE POWER INTO THE DAY'S DICTATION

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«*Take a letter...*»

PUTTING PERSUASIVE POWER INTO THE DAY'S DICTATION

By Jack Garrett

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JACK GARRETT

Was Someone Paging Jack Garrett?

When the Al Fields Minstrel men held their twilight concert in front of the New Opera House at Holton, Kansas I was the skinny, freckle-faced kid who held a torch for the performers.

Twenty-five years have passed . . . . and I am still holding a torch for the performers. But never have I illuminated an artist with more genuine delight than in this instance when I turn the light upon my friend, Jack Garrett.

Ten years ago Garrett worked with me. I said then, and I have often repeated, that he writes a better *dictated* letter than any man I know. And he certainly has had a tailor-made training for the job.

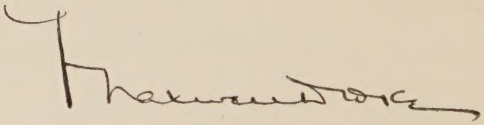
Jack was brought up in one of those country towns where you get close to Nature—human and otherwise. Graduating

from high school, while his "Beyond-the-Alps-lies-Italy" oration was still the talk of the community, our hero "accepted a position" with the county-seat newspaper. Pretty soon he was a full-fledged editor.

But ambition lashed him ever on. Jack wanted to be a Business Executive with a roll-top desk. So he took up stenography. I have a hunch that he was never very good at it. But it didn't matter. If his notes were illegible, he simply "made up something." And since Jack "made up" better letters than the boss could dictate, that worthy gentleman soon ceased to go through the motions. He simply turned young Garrett loose with the morning mail.

Since that eventful day Garrett has been writing letters that have successfully sold a string of articles as long as your arm, or maybe a little longer. A nervous breakdown took him West a few years ago, and now, in San Antonio, Texas, Jack's sparkling letters sell high-grade truck farms to the folks in Keokuk and points East.

In the pages that follow, I have sought to harvest and preserve the ripened fruit of an able man's experience. My hope is that you will gain as much pleasure in the reading of this book as we have found in its publication.



President,
THE BUSINESS LETTER INSTITUTE.

Chapter I

What Makes a Good Letter?

SOME SIMPLE SECRETS THAT EVERY DICTATOR SHOULD MASTER

A GENERATION ago, when Grandfather parked his Spencerian pen in a potato, his business letters were few and far between.

Occasionally he took pen in hand to acknowledge an order or register a complaint regarding the quality of that last shipment. Using letters to *build business* was something that never occurred to him.

But in this day when millions of dollars worth of merchandise is marketed through the mails, the business letter is becoming an increasingly important instrument. An executive of even a small business may dictate more letters in a single week than Grandfather penned in a twelvemonth.

Business is seeking, more than ever before, individuals who can harness the power of Persuasion and put this force to work in daily dictation. To help you put into *your* letters more of this compelling power, is the mission to which this book is dedicated.

As a result of numerous investigations, it is estimated that it costs from twenty-five cents to a dollar to get out a business letter, taking into consideration the time of the dictator, the time of the stenographer, stationery, postage and overhead. This means that every letter written, which fails to make a favorable impression, is a quarter or more unwisely expended.

But, entirely aside from the question of cost, a firm does not hire correspondents and stenographers just for the pleasure of scattering letters broadcast over the land. Every letter written has, or should have, some plan back of it, some task to perform. Each letter should be written to secure some definite reaction; help in reaching some desirable goal. If a letter does neither of these things, it is a failure no matter by whom it is written, nor how much time may have been devoted to its production.

The correspondence of many of the business firms of this country is uniformly of a high character, but a majority of the letters crowding the mails today are low in attention value, lacking in interest and not so constructed or worded as to arouse desire or inspire action. Some of these letters go into the waste basket unread, some are "almost good," and some had better never have been written at all.

It is conservatively estimated that eighty per cent of the business letters of today are capable of material improvement. This being true, each writer of business letters is vitally interested in locating the weak spots in the correspondence for which he is respon-

sible, and determining what can be done to increase its effectiveness.

What are the essentials of a good letter? Here is a question which any one of a hundred experts will answer from a little different angle, but all will agree that an effective letter must make a direct, personal appeal to the reader, offer a solution of his individual problems, or show him how he can gratify some desire.

Henry Hoke, who was awarded the Multigraph cup at a recent Direct Mail Advertising Association convention for the best series of letters produced and used during the year, suggests that there are eight words beginning with the letter "C" which can be used in analyzing a letter to determine its effectiveness: Is it concise, clear, correct, courteous, convincing, concrete, complete, conversational?

Edward H. Schulze, one of the outstanding sales counselors of the country and author of "Making-Letters-Pay System," gives as the basic principles of getting business through letters:

1. Seek the facts—get the proof. Avoid action or decision based on mere opinion.

2. Know—teach—convince. No one ever buys until convinced; conviction comes from understanding; understanding comes from teaching; you cannot teach unless you know.

3. Get down to brass tacks. Come to the point quickly; be specific; avoid generalities.

4. Be enthusiastic. Sustained patient effort gets results. Keep everlastingly at it.

While it may sound paradoxical, it is a fact that the chief reason a great many men write poor letters is that they try too hard to write good letters. Expressed in slanguage, the most important of all rules in writing letters is "Be yourself."

This point is splendidly exemplified by Jack Carr, of Tampa, Florida, creator of what he is pleased to term "Cordial Contacts." Carr's letters break most of the Rules and Regulations laid down for the Royal Order of Letter Writers. But they express the personality of the writer. And they *do* get results!

Among the engine manufacturers a letter often quoted is one where the purchaser of an engine makes mournful complaint that he isn't so much interested in "what makes the engine go," as he is in "what makes the engine stop." If it is possible to single out any one thing which can be designated as the chief fault of the majority of business letters, it is the failure to get the viewpoint of the person to whom the letter is addressed; the failure to tell him those things in which he is chiefly interested.

A strict observance of rules, and the proper use of the English language will not, necessarily, result in the production of a good letter. In order to write a letter that gets what it goes after, you must know your goods—materials, workmanship, and service performed. You must know who can use these goods to advantage and why. You must be able to look at your goods through the other fellow's glasses.

The writer of successful letters uses the written

word to play upon the emotions as the salesman does with the spoken word. The more nearly your letter approximates personal salesmanship, the more successful it will be.

Whenever a letter is addressed to a person, covering a subject in which he has not previously expressed interest, you are asking him to give to a consideration of your affairs time which he would probably prefer to spend otherwise. Getting a letter no longer gives the average man or woman a thrill. Your letter must compete with dozens of others for attention. If it is lacking in attention value, the chances are against its being read.

This manual treats, in a brief and simple way, all of the factors entering into the use of dictated letters in getting business. The man who studies it carefully will have a clear understanding as to the what and why of a good letter and how to go about writing one.

It is possible that the reader will be puzzled by some seeming contradictions. In one chapter he is told to do a certain thing, and in another chapter cautioned to be careful how he does that very thing. The Dutchman's conception of a sufficiency does not apply to letter writing: "Enough is enough, but too much is just right." The old-time patent medicine manufacturer claimed that his formula would cure almost any ailment, but there are no formulas for the writing of business letters which apply to all cases. Use good common sense in adapting the suggestions in this book to your own use.

There's a lot of difference between knowing how to do a thing and doing it. You might master all of the books that have ever been published on the art of letter-writing without being able to write a good business letter. Only through the application of the knowledge you gain will you derive the full measure of benefit from your study.

Chapter II

Opening Paragraphs and Closed Minds

Fighting indifference and prejudice with your first fifty words

The most important part of your letter is the first paragraph or two. While a busy man will often throw a circular—known as such by the stamp or the unsealed envelope—into the waste basket unread, first class mail is always opened and given at least a cursory inspection. If the first paragraph is so worded as to awaken some degree of interest, the chances are good that the remainder of the letter will be read.

A letter can get attention by a first paragraph that:

1. Arouses curiosity.

Example A: "Good farm help is scarce and high priced but John Jones, of Castroville, Indiana, is getting his water pumped, his wood sawed and his feed ground at a cost of only a few cents a day." Example B: "Three years ago Robert Armstrong was a shipping clerk, at a salary of $30.00 a week. Last year his income was over $5,000.00."

2. Asks a pertinent question.

Example A: "When that boy of yours is ready to go to college are you going to be able to send him? Wouldn't it take a lot of worry off your mind to know absolutely that the funds for his education will be available when needed?" Example B: "How are you going to be fixed for funds when your vacation time comes this year?"

3. Appeals to self interest.

Example A: "Now you can get that extra suit at a big saving! In order to keep our tailors busy during the dull season, we are offering our best customers a 20% discount on all suits tailored this month." Example B: "You can sell from ten to twenty-five cases of Oddment in thirty days and make a clear profit of $8.00 on every case. Here's how:"

4. Has a "newsy" flavor.

Example A: "On June 12th a hail storm destroyed most of the wheat in the fields, over a strip twenty to sixty miles wide in Western Kansas. And most of the farmers who lost their wheat carried no hail insurance." Example B: "Wonder tires were used on the cars finishing first, second, eighth, tenth, fourteenth and fifteenth, at the Indianapolis Speedway last week."

5. Touches upon a subject of personal interest to the reader.

Example A: "Tom Turner just told me about your boy winning the tennis championship of your city. That surely is something to be proud of." Ex-

ample B: "The wirehaired fox terrier that captured first place at the kennel show here yesterday is as like your dog as two peas in the pod."

6. Is of a complimentary nature.

Example A: "In this day of chain store competition, it takes an exceptionally good merchant to show an increase in business annually for five years in succession. After reading the article in this month's "Retailer," we feel sure that you are the kind of merchant who will recognize the profit possibilities in our line." Example B: "Our big Annual Sale is open Monday to the public—Saturday to you."

There are very few men or women who do not feel pleased over a neatly turned compliment, or a statement which implies a compliment. *But,* great care must be taken to avoid making statements which are not likely to be believed, such as, "When we told our President, Hiram W. Westfall, that we were about to offer our line to another dealer in Rockport, he went right up in the air and stated that you are the only merchant in that city capable of giving us proper representation." Don't use flattery, but if you can mention some incident or happening, of which the prospect has reason to be proud, it will invariably please.

7. Emphasizes the most striking feature of the article or service about which you are writing.

Example: "In front of the store of Joe Dawson, 213 West Main Street, there is a miniature Trutex tent on which a stream of water has been running for

forty-three days. And it is still dry as a chip on the inside."

While it is very essential that the first paragraph or two of a letter be such as to awaken interest, these opening paragraphs must lead the reader into the body of the letter, and the emotions aroused must be further stimulated. If the opening paragraphs are foreign to the real subject matter of the letter, there is a gap left which the average reader will seldom cross. A man can always attract attention by climbing on a soap box and yelling, but the crowd he collects will quickly drift away, when it is found that he has nothing of interest to say.

In composing a letter which is of sufficient importance to justify revising and rearranging, it will often be found that some paragraph down in the body of the letter will make a more effective lead-off than the one originally used. Sometimes the letter will be made stronger by entirely eliminating the first two or three paragraphs.

While it is seldom advisable to take the opening paragraph from some letter that you admire to start one of your own letters, here are a few examples, which may give you an idea of how it is possible to tie your letter up with the self interest of the man or woman to whom you are writing:

A direct advertising man says: "Wouldn't it be a fine thing if your salesmen could go to a town where some one had sorted out all of the live prospects, and

placed a chalk mark on the door of every one worth calling on?"

A commercial letter company sends out a letter to prospective customers, printed in red ink, which starts off: "A re(a)d letter. Just apply the significance of those three letters to your own letter advertising."

A mail order concern goes straight to the point by saying: "On July 1st the price of the Statler bag will go up."

A firm selling the idea of distributing through warehouses says: " 'Immediately!' How often that reply has closed a sale when the prospect asked when delivery could be made."

In a letter, applying for a position as a sales promotion man: "You are fighting for business and more business. But you know that it is possible to buy volume at such a high cost that it will not profit you at all."

A letter, written prospective buyers by a colonization company: "Are you willing to give a few days of your time and spend a few dollars in investigating an opportunity which may mean greater prosperity, better health, more pleasure out of life for you and your family?"

Letter to dry cleaning concerns, endeavoring to interest them in a certain type of business body for their trucks: "You know full well that it takes more than a can of gasoline, a tub and a sponge to carry on a legitimate dry cleaning business."

Letter, endeavoring to interest a farmer in a gas

engine: "If there is a way for you to save time and labor, decrease expense and increase production, you want to know it. Isn't that right?"

Letter to an ice cream manufacturer, seeking to sell him cabinets for the use of his dealers: "Getting your cream into the hands of the dealers is only the first step. It is not really sold until it reaches the consumer."

An Investment House: "You are a rare and resourceful man if you are as clever at investing money as you are at making it. Most men have all they can do making enough so there will be some left to invest."

Fireless Cooker Company: "Are you ready for the woman who wants a fireless cooker but can't pay ten or fifteen dollars?"

Furniture Store: "After baby's food and baby's clothes, the most important thing you have to decide upon is the little cart that baby is going to ride in—is going to be seen in—is going to be admired in."

A Filling Station: "Don't you get tired of fishing around in your pocket for a small bill with which to pay for your gasoline, and then have to wait for your change?"

A Manufacturer: "'She didn't buy anything!' How often is this little tragedy repeated in your store?"

A Restaurant, in a letter with a piece of string knotted in one corner: "The only string that's tied

to our invitation to make the Madrillon your daily luncheon headquarters is knot to expect high prices."

An Insurance Company: "Will you let us provide you with a watchman to protect your home against the ravages of the burglar who is so active these days?"

A Ventilating Company: "Is your kitchen telling its secrets all over the house?"

Pete Moberly, Old Green River tobacco: "Hello, this is Pete Moberly, of Owensboro, talking, not on long distance, for friendly letters between friends bring us closer than that."

Direct Mail Advertising Company: "Some folks use door knobs to fool a setting hen—but they are no joke for a salesman when he has been pulling them all day."

Office Appliance Company: "Will you give me the benefit of your opinion on this very unusual invention?"

Correspondence Course: "I am going to make you a present of $14.00 cold cash."

Garage Equipment Manufacturer: "Why divide the profits that should *all* be yours—when you tackle a starting-lighting-ignition job?"

Chapter III

The Fault that Hampers 90% of Our Letters

WHY SO MANY DICTATED MESSAGES NEVER GET ANYWHERE

The closing paragraph is generally a difficult one to write. This is the paragraph which is supposed to incite to action. During one advertising cycle it was considered good practice to close with a direct command, such as "Fill out the order blank and mail it in today."

Now, advertising experts are inclined to doubt that any large number of men or women were ever induced to grab their hats and hot-foot it for the post office because they read at the close of a letter "Do it now!" Undoubtedly the most successful salesmen are those who make their prospects want to buy—make it easy for them to buy—instead of strenuously trying to sell them.

Suppose a man walked into your office, and after telling you what he considered to be the greatly superior qualities of Zip, concluded by saying: "The

successful men of our country are the clean-handed men. Put yourself in their class. Get a cake of Zip and try a good wash. Tomorrow may be too late. Go get that Zip now." Perhaps no one would ever be quite so crude, but some letter writers offend through endeavoring to force a favorable decision in the closing paragraphs.

Undoubtedly the old time closing, draped in the whiskers of the "Forties," has no place in the modern letter, and it is best to eliminate such phrases as, "Thanking you for past favors and hoping that we may have a continuance of the same." It has been my experience, however, that it is impossible to entirely avoid the complimentary close, in those letters which are not seeking to make a sale, and in such instances one may employ a friendly phrase such as, "With thanks to you for your courtesy and wishing you every success, we are . . ."

Many good letter writers consider any participial ending weak. In fact, some prefer to eliminate the closing phrase entirely, simply signing their names when they have finished with the subject matter of the letter. This abruptness, however, may be offensive to some readers.

Good salesmen understand that, after the order has been secured, it is wise to get away as soon as possible, but they don't grab their sample cases and stalk away without a word. The slight awkwardness inherent to leave-taking is forgotten in a cheerful, "Thanks a lot, Mr. Brown; see you again next

month"; or, "I surely do appreciate your courtesy in giving me some of your time. Let me know when you are ready for those prices."

The great trouble with many letters is that they never get anywhere. A man can read such a letter through without learning just what the writer wishes him to do, or in fact why the letter was written. The last paragraph, or paragraphs, is the logical place in which to answer the questions: What to do? How to do it? When to do it? If your letter is written to induce the addressee to do some specific thing, do not hesitate about stating plainly what it is—and just why it is to his interest to do it. If you can offer no spur to action, sum up your proposition briefly in the closing paragraphs. Stop with some thought that will leave the reader thinking favorably of you and of your goods; strive for an ending that will leave a pleasant taste in his mouth.

When a change is desired from "Very truly yours" or the more friendly "Sincerely yours," it is often possible to use a phrase indicative of the spirit in which the letter is written, or of the mood of the writer, such as "Faithfully yours," "Hopefully yours," "Enthusiastically yours," "Yours for cooperation," "Yours for turnover," "Yours for More Miles at Less Cost."

Just as a question makes a good opening for a letter, it can often be used to advantage as a closer. Examples: "Why not get your share of this profitable business?" "Can you afford to pass up this chance to get your winter's coal at such a big saving?" "Will

you let us demonstrate how much time, energy and money this machine will save you?"

Whenever you write a letter, through which you hope to persuade your reader to do that which you would have him do, you will get results in accordance with your ability to make him feel that it is to his interest to do that thing. Your last paragraph should always offer some inducement for action—provided some action is desired. Don't depend upon worn-out phrases such as "Do it now!" Try to express yourself in a little more original way. Use persuasion, rather than command. Here are a few examples of "closers," which may be of some help to you in your dictation:

"The more complete the information you give us on the enclosed blank, the easier it will be for us to give you just the facts you require in making your decision. And the sooner you get it in the mail, the sooner we can give you those facts."

"You have never given us any of your printing. We are not kicking about that, but there's a chance, you know, that we have a little more to offer you than the other fellows. Why not find out? Why not fill in on the enclosed card the date on which you will be ready to figure on your next job and drop it in the mail basket? Then we will both be ready when the time comes."

"Now, while the return card is before you and pen and ink handy, is the most convenient time you will ever find for filling in your name and address. No

stamp is required. Just drop the card in the mail box and you'll receive promptly full details of our special cash offer. The Simpson is easy to buy, easy to operate—and it will save you a lot of money every year."

"Remember you don't buy until you try. Sign and mail the enclosed card when it is convenient to do so, and we will mail you ..... by prepaid express. Try it out for ten days. If, at the end of that period you are not satisfied that it will be worth many times its cost to you, return at our expense."

"Your interest in our machine is appreciated and we have enjoyed telling you why we are sure it will be a good buy for you. According to the information you gave us, an investment of $250.00 will save you well over a hundred dollars a year. And Jewell Brothers, our agents in your city, will deliver a .... to you any time you say the word."

"And doesn't that remind you that you buy a good many pencils during the course of a year? We are sending you a sample of our Adams Medium Soft, sharpened and ready for use. Try it out and see if you don't think it a pretty good pencil for only $—— a dozen. Keep it on your desk. Possibly you may want to use it some day in filling out a trial order for a few dozen."

"That's why we figure you can make good money on our line. Suppose you do a little figuring yourself and let our salesman, Mr. Walter Carter, know what

answer you get, when he calls on you the first of the month."

"If Brown Brothers sold a gross of ..... in three months, we know you can sell three gross—or more—in the same length of time. In fact, we are so sure of it that we will agree to take back any you may have left at the end of that period. You are taking absolutely no risk in sending in your order today."

"Your letter reached us this morning and we are answering the same day. Just a small example of the promptness with which any business you give us will be handled. In these days when turnover is so important, delayed shipments mean loss. Let us demonstrate that with us 'Service' is more than just a word."

"A customer means more to us than just a source of orders. Should you decide to give us your business you can count upon effective cooperation through our sales promotion department. The enclosed card will bring you full details of our business-building plans."

Chapter IV

Painting Your Reader Into the Picture

IF YOU WOULD WRITE STRONGER LETTERS REMEMBER THIS RULE

In order to become a consistent writer of good letters, the ability to write correct, concise English is important. But it is even more essential in securing results to be able to talk the language of the prospect than it is to be one hundred per cent perfect in grammar.

A man can never hope to become especially successful as a writer of sales letters who does not like his fellow men, sympathize with them in their troubles, glory in their achievements. One of the greatest helps in writing good letters is the ability to put yourself in the other fellow's place and see things through his eyes.

A letter may prove almost a complete failure, even when carefully worked out in accordance with the rules offered as governing business correspondence, because of being written from the writer's own view-

point, instead of from that of the prospective customer.

No matter on what subject you are writing, nor what you are endeavoring to accomplish, approach your prospect from his "you" side. There are no high fences nor stone walls erected there to bar your approach. It is not possible to avoid the use of the words "I" and "we," but be very careful not to start every sentence or every other sentence with a personal pronoun.

This does not mean that it is not all right, at times, to write about your factory or store, the character of service you are in a position to offer, the superiority of your goods, or the personnel of your organization, but this can be done without assuming the attitude of: "Just see what we have done with our big hatchet" . . . "This is our way of doing it; ain't it grand?" No other one thing will do as much toward increasing the effectiveness of your letters as the acquisition of the habit of thinking, while dictating: "What is this going to mean to the man to whom I am writing? How is he going to look at what I am saying? Just exactly what can our goods and our service do that will profit him?"

Do not get the idea from this that if you are writing to persons of limited education you should write as you think they talk; nor does it mean that you should use the broken, incomplete sentences of a street conversation, the slang of some trade, or nationality. It does mean that you should not use

words which will be strange and unfamiliar to the person addressed. It means that you should write in a language which will awaken familiar images in his mind, make him feel that you are traveling on the same plane with him.

The use of words and phrases peculiar to the trade, business or profession of the prospect is generally effective, but be very sure that the words or phrases you use are in accordance with accepted usage. People are most critical concerning those things most intimately associated with their daily lives. If you use the wrong words, or the right words in the wrong connection, or if you make a statement which your readers know from experience to be untrue, your letter will simply amuse them, no matter how strong it may be otherwise.

The letters which bring the largest returns are those written by men who know something concerning the mode of living, the thoughts and the emotions of their prospective purchasers.

Strange as it may seem, some men write poor letters because they give them too much thought, rather than not enough. They approach the task of dictating a letter with a determination to make it accord with all of the suggestions they have gleaned from books, manuals and magazine articles on letter writing. They revise and change and rewrite until they have a letter that is wholly mechanical.

Study the authorities on letter writing; acquire all of the knowledge possible as to the proper con-

struction of a letter; familiarize yourself with the methods used by experts, and then, when you start to dictate, forget rules and regulations. Make up your mind what you want to say and then say it in the simplest, most direct, most interesting way possible.

The greatest difficulty experienced by a man who handles a large volume of correspondence day after day is to keep his dictation from becoming mechanical. It is so much easier to use certain phrases over and over again than it is to spur a jaded brain into action. It is not possible to write twenty-five letters on practically the same subject, and make each one wholly different.

Unless there is some slight variance in the letters you are answering—unless you know some of the characteristics of certain of the writers—it is a waste of time to dictate a reply to each letter. Better take whatever time may be necessary to figure out the most effective reply possible, under the conditions and circumstances common to a group of letters, and have your stenographer write the same letter to all of them.

In the good old days of long ago, when business was pursued in a much more leisurely and dignified way, a letter might have arrived in the morning mail, reading about like this:

"Gentlemen: I have been referred to your company as a manufacturer of buggies. Being a physician, I am called upon to make many trips, some of them over rough and rocky roads. Up to the time

of the present writing, I have been unable to find a buggy which will stand up under the treatment I am compelled to give it.

"Will you, therefore, do me the favor of recommending a buggy of your make which you consider suitable for my use, taking into consideration the nature of my profession and the fact that I am over six feet in height and weigh 225 pounds. Send illustration and full description and quote a delivered price."

And the member of the firm having charge of the correspondence would take his pen in hand and reply:

"Your highly esteemed favor of the 24th ult., is at hand and the contents have been carefully noted. In reply we beg to advise that we have been favored with the patronage of the most prominent business and professional men of the South. We will be pleased to accept your order for one of our vehicles, and should you so favor us, we will use our best endeavors to provide you with a buggy which will meet with your entire approval."

Then, after two or three pages devoted to a flowery description of the factory, the firm, the workmen and the line, the letter closes:

"Again expressing our appreciation of your most valued inquiry and trusting that we may be favored with your order, we beg to remain."

Today some letter writers go to the other extreme and strive so hard for pep and ginger that they be-

come more or less offensive. Supose one of these pep artists were answering the above letter, he would probably write:

"Some man, Doc! Not much wonder the common or garden variety of buggy lays down on the job after a few trips with you. But you sure have come to the right place. We can fix you up with a buggy that will carry those 225 pounds of yours anywhere you want to go—and keep right on doing it for several years. Yes, sir, old man, you won't have to do any dieting to ride in that vehicle of ours."

The man who has had but little experience in the writing of letters might start off like this:

"Your letter of September 6th just received and we can truthfully say that we are in a position to supply you with any style of buggy you want, since we have twenty-seven different styles in our line, and every one is constructed of the very best material by skilled workmen. Under separate cover we are sending you one of our complete catalogs and can ship promptly any buggy you may select."

But the experienced correspondent would go at it more like this:

"When the call comes the physician must go, regardless of the hour, the condition of the roads, or the distance. It is of supreme importance that you should not be delayed in making your calls by buggy trouble.

"With the information given in your letter of Sep-

tember 6th, we are able to select from our line a buggy for you which will meet your somewhat unusual requirements. You are certainly to be congratulated upon a physique which enables you to stand up under the strain of making long, wearisome drives. But we can make things a little easier for you by fixing you up with a vehicle that you can be sure will get you safely to your destination—and you will ride in comfort, too.

"Our catalog has been mailed and should reach you in a day or two. When you get it, turn to page 27, where you will find our Burton Special illustrated and described. You will see that this buggy is of special construction, planned to withstand extra hard use, without any sacrifice of appearance. This vehicle looks good, and it is just as good as it looks.

"Our Burton Special is a favorite with physicians everywhere. Dr. James Gray, of Longview, Indiana, wrote us on August 16th of this year: 'How soon can you ship me another Burton Special? The one I bought from you seven years ago is still running, but it is beginning to look a little shabby. I don't mind saying that I do not believe there is another buggy manufactured in the United States that would have stood up half as long under the treatment I have given this one.'

"Our Burton Special will cost you $225.00, delivered at your station. At that price, you will find this the most economical vehicle you can own, taking into consideration length of service and upkeep cost. It will be necessary to make a few alterations in order to insure complete driving comfort for you, so in order to hasten delivery we suggest that you wire in your order at our expense. Yours for Service."

It is a mistake to feel that, because you seem not to have a natural turn for letter writing, the production of effective letters is beyond you. You can make a decided improvement in your letters by:

1. Gaining a clear understanding of what you, or your goods, can do for your correspondent.

2. Carefully considering the probable viewpoint of the man to whom you are writing.

3. Talking about what your products can do for him, rather than what you want him to do for you.

4. Deciding, before you start to write, just what it is you want the reader to do and what reasons you can offer why he should do it.

5. Avoiding insincerity, generalities and exaggeration.

6. Using clear, simple language and forceful words.

7. Avoiding meaningless and hackneyed words and phrases.

8. Learning to feel that each letter you write is going to an individual who can be inspired to action through an appeal to his emotions.

9. Practice. Practice. Practice.

In the effort to turn out better letters, one of the first things to be done is to eliminate the cumbersome, meaningless and antiquated phrases, such as "Your favor of the first inst., received and in reply we beg to advise."

Some correspondents make their letter writing too much of a mechanical process. There is no use in

writing a page if three lines are sufficient, but interest should not be sacrificed to brevity. It is generally possible to breathe a little life into a letter, even upon the dryest of subjects.

Some correspondents err in trying to inject too much "pep" into their letters. Some use long, involved sentences. Some are too abrupt, and some go to the other extreme and write two or three paragraphs before getting to the meat of their letter. Some write entirely from their own viewpoint, or that of their firm. Some are more intent upon turning out letters that are models of good English than they are concerned about the effect upon the reader.

All of these are faults which can be overcome.

The good old formula for sales letters and advertising is: "Get attention, arouse interest, create desire, inspire action." Nothing could be sweeter, but it must be remembered that if you adhere too closely to any formula, follow too closely any set of rules, the result may be a letter that is lifeless. No matter if your letter be somewhat awkward and uncouth, if it carries a spirit of sincerity, friendliness and helpfulness, it will be welcomed by your correspondent.

Good letters are written in many different ways and styles. Some writers find it essential to make notes and memoranda, to which they refer in dictating replies to correspondence. Others seem to arrange the data in their subconscious minds and do not hesitate over the right reply to a number of letters. It is undoubtedly well to go carefully over each letter

that is to be answered, and if lengthy and somewhat complicated, note on the margin the various points to be covered in your reply. Secure and have ready for use such data as you may require to answer fully any questions that are asked. Be sure you understand what each of your correspondents had in mind when he wrote his letter.

It is not possible to give as much time and thought to the average dictated letter as may be devoted to a form letter, which is to go out to thousands of prospects. The dictated letter is usually written to secure or convey information, or in response to one that has been received. For these reasons, dictated letters are generally insured of attention from the recipient, but two points which should always be kept in mind are:

1. Read carefully the letter which is to be answered, in order to secure a clear idea of what the writer desires to know, and be sure that you give him all of the information which he requests.

2. Write your reply in such a way that it is reasonably sure to get a reaction favorable to your goods, your service or your firm.

Chapter V

"Sales Instinct"—and How You Can Develop It

THE SIMPLE WAY TO MAKE EVERY LETTER A SALES LETTER

During the Civil War my father-in-law was so unfortunate as to be confined in a prison camp for quite a while. He used to chuckle as he told how one of his fellow-prisoners managed to get hold of some old boxes, with which he built a rickety little shack; constructed a stove out of old cans; bargained with some of the prisoners for a portion of their daily issue of corn meal—and did a thriving business on hot corn cakes.

Some men are so impregnated with "sales instinct" that it governs their actions under almost any conditions or circumstances. No matter where a "born" salesman may be, nor what he may be doing, if he scents a sale he will immediately forget all other interests and take up the trail.

Some men are born with this instinct and others achieve it, but it is just as important an element in

the success of the dictator of sales letters, as it is in that of the man who sells through personal contact with the prospective purchaser. How can sales instinct be developed by the correspondent?

By regarding every letter which comes into his hands, no matter by whom written or what it may say, as representing an opportunity for the sale of the firm's goods, either immediately, or at some future date.

By generating so much enthusiasm over the merits of the goods he is selling—the quality of the materials used, the superior workmanship, the benefits to be derived from their use—that he will feel he is doing a favor to a man when he tells about them.

By studying human nature until he has gained an understanding of the emotions which govern the actions of men and women, and by constantly experimenting in how to most effectively appeal to those emotions through the written word.

By acquiring the faculty of seeing behind every letter he handles a man or woman, with a definite personality.

By learning to construct a mental image of the writer of a letter from what he says and how he says it, as a scientist takes a handful of bones and reconstructs a prehistoric mammal.

Through tasting the joy that comes from the writing of letters that "bring home the bacon." After his carefully-aimed shots have brought down some big

game, he will become an enthusiastic hunter and seldom become weary of tracking sales to their lair.

You may think "That's easy enough to *say!*" But acquiring "sales instinct" sounds more difficult and complicated than it really is. You can't read over these suggestions one evening and wake up the following morning fairly oozing sales instinct, but you CAN determine to follow the path that has been pointed out, struggling on a little farther toward the goal each day. And you will be well paid for your effort, because the man who acquires the ability to write letters which get what they go after will find his services in demand at a good salary. There is no better plan for getting that much-desired "raise."

Suppose that the man who is deficient in sales instinct is acknowledging the receipt of an order, he will probably write:

"Your order has just been received, calling for the following items ..... We surely appreciate this business and will ship the order complete on January 15th."

While the chap with "sales instinct" would go at it more like this:

"Thanks a lot for your order of January 11th, which will be shipped complete the morning of the 15th. You have made a splendid selection of goods from our line and we are sure you will enjoy a quick turnover on them. But, you failed to include any of our No. 25 ....., which many of the merchants in your state have found to be one of their best sellers.

"You will find ..... illustrated on page 26 of our catalog. When properly displayed, its vivid coloring catches the eye of every customer. We are sending this letter by air mail, so you can wire us, collect, to include a few dozen of No. 25 with your order."

In writing a collection letter, one man might say:

"Your account, in the amount of $125.00, is now sixty days past due. We are unable to understand why you would treat us in this unfair and unjust manner. We must insist upon immediate payment."

But the correspondent who believes in making every letter a sales letter, would write more like this:

"Has something gone wrong down in Thorntown? It is certainly unusual for you to overlook the payment of an account. Possibly it's a case of 'when the other fellow pays us we'll pay you.' We have some ideas that might help speed up collections. Would you like to have them?

"Some of our customers have told us that we turned out the finest line of neckties last season that ever adorned the manly bosoms of the American business men—but, 'you ain't seen nothing yet.'

"Just wait until Charlie Mitchell gets around to see you next month. You will want to buy liberally and we are anxious to see you get your account in shape to take advantage of some of the special deals Mitchell will tell you about."

It will help in acquiring "sales instinct" to form the habit of being constantly on the alert for opportu-

nities for placing a prospective customer in a buying humor. A newspaper item which contains information of general interest to the trade can be used in writing sales letters. A note in a trade paper, concerning the organization of a new firm, opens up an avenue leading to orders. It often paves the way to future sales to pass on to others some sales plan which a certain merchant has found profitable.

Sales instinct will often grasp the chance remark of a salesman as offering a point of contact with some prospective buyer of goods. Joe Jones brings in from his territory the advertisement of a department store, headed "The Fair's Follies," which tells in a humorous way of the mistakes of this store's buyers and offers these "mistakes" at ridiculously low prices. As Joe passes this advertisement around, the average man will laugh and comment "pretty clever," but the fellow with "sales instinct" will at once see a chance for some sales. He writes to a selected list of customers, suggesting a sale of this character, and winds up by saying:

"A 'Follies' sale will clean up a lot of your 'stickers' and make room for some nice, fresh goods, which you can sell quickly at a profit. It would be hard for a buyer to find any 'mistakes' in our spring line of shoes. Did you ever see anything more calculated to appeal to the feminine fancy than our No. 32, illustrated in the enclosed folder?"

Regard the writer of every letter which comes to your desk as a prospective purchaser of your firm's

goods, until you are satisfied to the contrary. Don't become discouraged because you receive an unfavorable reply to one of your sales letters. You have made considerable progress when you get a man to state his reasons for not buying.

A good salesman is able to size up a prospect pretty well in the first few minutes of contact, especially if he has secured all of the information possible concerning his man before the interview. Some letters are devoid of clues as to the personality or characteristics of the writer, but you know—in the majority of cases—whether your correspondent is a man or a woman; often the letterhead indicates business connections; you know from the address in what section of the country the prospect is located.

Not much to go on, to be sure, but still sufficient to help you formulate your sales appeal. Often it is a wise policy to write a letter chiefly for the purpose of securing information which will place you in a position to follow-up with a stronger and more personal sales letter than would otherwise be possible.

In going over a batch of mail, getting ready for dictation, search each letter for something which will give you a clue to the personality of the writer, and the mental reactions which caused him to write as he did. If a man writes you concerning the use to which he expects to put a certain article, then you will want to emphasize why YOUR article is especially well adapted to that use.

If you note that the idea of cost or price predomi-

nates in a letter, then you will dwell upon the low price of your goods; or, if your price is higher than that of competitors, you will talk quality and value. If you find, on reading a letter, that the writer seems to be uncertain as to what make of product it is best to buy, that is your signal to write about the special features of your product—why it is to be preferred to others.

In handling a large volume of correspondence, it is often hard to think of a new way of saying the same thing. If you will form the habit of trying to find in each letter something that is different from the dozens of other letters on a similar subject that have come to your attention that day, it will be of much help in getting your thoughts out of the worn path in your brain, formed by constant repetition.

"Getting started" is generally the hardest part of writing letters. It is something like trying to force a jaded horse to take a high jump. But if you can glean an idea or two from the letter to which you are preparing to make reply, the words will come easily enough. And very small things in a letter are sufficient to generate an idea.

For instance, one letter may say, "This is a very small town." (By trading with us through the mail she will be able to get city styles and modes.) Another may say, "I saw your ad in a copy of LIFE—" (Reads LIFE, he will probably appreciate that story about how Smith wrecked his radio.) Another, "We can't afford to put much money into it." (What I

want to show this fellow is that the money he puts into this property will come back to him manyfold, besides making for economy in his living expenses.) Another, "My neighbor has a Blufer that I like pretty well." (Won't do to knock the Blufer, but I will emphasize appearance and economy of operation—that's where the Blufer is weak.) Another, "The chain stores are buying a lot cheaper than I can." (This chap is down in the mouth. I must cheer him up and tell him of some of the ways in which he has the advantage of the chain stores.) Another, "Machinery has always given us too much grief." (This fellow doesn't appreciate that even a child can operate our machine and that he will seldom be called upon for service.)

In many of the letters you receive you will find something which will suggest how you can arouse the interest of the writer. If not, you will have to reply in such a way as you believe will be interesting to any individual of the class of prospects to which the writer belongs.

Every time you write a letter to a man you are establishing contact with him, and if your letter is properly charged with personality, you will get a spark which will kindle a small flame of good will. And that small flame, carefully fanned by succeeding letters, will eventually melt away the ice of prejudice and indifference, and so convert a "cold turkey" prospect into a customer.

Many of the letters you write will not be expected

to produce any immediate tangible results, but it is possible to bring in checks and orders by mail. And the man who once discovers that the right kind of letters will get results is going to consider the arrival of the morning's mail the most interesting event of the day.

A great many business men are inclined to believe that letters are wasted which do not produce immediate results. The fact is that letters can be used—and are used—to great advantage in winning friendship and good will, and insuring that when an order is placed it will come to you, instead of going to a competitor. The letter below is quoted verbatim and illustrates the benefit derived from the courteous, friendly follow-up of an inquiry:

"Your esteemed favor of the 6th making inquiry about why we had not answered your previous letters is received, and you are exactly correct in your surmise that we don't fall over ourselves going back to the clerk who gets a peeve on when we don't spend ourselves broke, just because we had the temerity to ask him something about his wares.

"However, in your case you have been so very nice and interested in our needs, that if we were in a position now to either need to buy, or buy if we did need, an engine, we would most likely get real serious about this engine purchase and buy a dozen or so just because we like you. But the honest truth is that we just simply don't need one now, and the reason we took the matter up with you was that we hoped to need one, or maybe more than one, and we wanted to know something about the different kinds when we

had need of one. We have all your letters and dope put carefully away in our files, and when we get to that blessed position where we need and can pay for an engine, you shall hear from us 'muy pronto.'

"We thank you for your interest in our needs, and wish for you all kinds of success. You deserve it because you go after it."

Chapter VI

"Human Interest"—How to Put It On Paper

The one best way to take the "frost" out of your dictated letters

Haven't you often shaken hands with a man who simply let his cold fingers rest lifelessly within your grasp?

There are probably exceptions, but, as a rule, the man who shakes hands in this manner is cold-blooded, deficient in energy, and not very much interested in "people." A letter may be regarded as a mental handshake, and a letter written by a man of this type is generally lacking in vitality and warmth. How are you going to get human interest down on paper if you lack interest in humanity?

In order to write human interest letters, it is not necessary that you should, figuratively speaking, get your finger in the buttonhole of your correspondent and display a spirit of familiarity which he may resent, but you must make him feel that you sincerely desire to become better acquainted with him and are

interested in his affairs. You must write in the free and easy style of a conversation, rather than as an orator addresses his audience or a professor lectures to his class.

It is probably true that many of the letters you are called upon to answer are written by men and women who are your social inferiors, or who are not so well educated, but we Americans have a tendency to think, "I'm just as good as anybody else," no matter what our station in life. If you want to write human interest letters you must be willing to meet your correspondents on their own plane of thought. Religiously avoid any assumption of superiority in the letters which you write.

What do we mean by "human interest" in a letter, anyway? That which is of interest to humans. In order to get human interest down on paper you must write about something you have reason to believe will be of interest to your correspondent, and you must write in a frank, free, friendly way. You must be enthusiastic over the goods about which you write, and still more enthusiastic concerning what they will do for the man to whom you are writing. You should adorn your facts with fancy, instill warmth into cold figures, use vital, meaningful words, instead of those which are dull, drab and lifeless. You must make your reader feel that you understand and sympathize with his problems.

There is some danger that the inexperienced correspondent, in endeavoring to dress his sales message

in accordance with these suggestions, will give too much attention to sound and not enough to meaning. What you say is always of more importance than how you say it. If there are some forceful, vital ideas back of your letter, the reader will get them regardless of the manner of presentation. Human interest on paper does not mean fine writing, beautifully rounded sentences, carefully polished phrases, the introduction of extraneous matter to "make it interesting," nor the use of a multiplicity of words in making a simple statement of fact. The best way to get human interest on paper is to forget "human interest" when you start to dictate and think only that you are writing to a fellow human, with hates and fears, likes and dislikes, hopes and desires such as are common to all men; that you are in a position to render him service and are eager to tell him about it.

Instead of writing "Your letter of January 5th just received," say "Your good letter of January 5th was surely welcome," or "Thank you for writing us on January 5th about ....." Instead of writing "Your order just received and it will have our preferred attention," say "That's just fine! Your order just received makes the fifth since September 1st for ..... More power to you."

Instead of writing "This paint contains only the best ingredients and will give you first-class satisfaction. We trust you will instruct us to ship ten gallons at the prices shown on the enclosed list," say "Seeing is believing! There's a house at 27 Mulberry Street

which was given two coats of our Everlasting paint in September, 1927. Drive by this property some evening and notice how this job is standing up. Don't you believe that our No. 16, cream, trimmed with our No. 46, Persian orange, would make that home of yours look like a million dollars?"

Instead of writing "We trust we have given you the information you desired and that you will favor us with your order at an early date," say "Have we told you all you wanted to know? If not, come right back at us, won't you? We want that new home of yours to be warm and comfortable and we will gladly work with you to that end, regardless of whether we sell you a furnace or not."

It has happened, and may happen again, that the office boy writes a letter on a certain subject, which is considerably more effective than one on the same subject dictated by the president of the company. The office boy is bubbling over with enthusiasm and all he thinks about is "letting the other fellow in on a good thing." The president's dignity won't allow him to display unbecoming enthusiasm and he feels that a man in his position is expected to go further than just write a letter. He must turn out something "literary."

Be natural and if you can't be natural be as natural as you can. Don't be afraid to come down off your pedestal and mingle with common folks. How can you write human interest letters when you don't know what most interests humans? Don't keep

your own emotions tightly bottled up and then expect to be able to write a letter which will cause the other fellow to uncork his. Don't think that human nature on Broadway is essentially different from human nature on Main Street. As Kipling so aptly said, "Judy O'Grady and the Colonel's lady are sisters under the skin."

A city man, who was vacationing in the South, undertook to drive a team of somewhat balky mules. Arriving at a nice shady spot in the road, the mules declined to go farther, and the amateur driver used moral suasion and other methods without effect. Just then an old darky happened along. "Boss," he asked, "does yo' all want them mules to go on fum heah?" Being assured that this was something ardently desired, the old darkey climbed up on the seat, took hold of the reins, and proceeded to tell those mules a few pertinent things—and they ambled off. "Now, why wouldn't they go for me?" puzzled the city man. "Boss," said Mose, "yo' all don't talk their langwidge."

It is not necessary that you should write a man in the language he uses in his daily conversation, but it is necessary, if you want to gain his interest, that you write in a language he will experience no difficulty in understanding. In order to get human interest on paper you must:

1. Get an understanding of humanity.

2. Feel—or at least simulate—an interest in the welfare of your prospect.

3. Write always of what you can do for your prospect, instead of what you want him to do for you.

4. Keep your thoughts on the same plane with his; get him interested in your sales message by tying it up with something of personal interest to him.

5. Write in a language that will make the prospect feel you understand and are in accord with his views of life.

Examples of human interest letters are to be found in books and business magazines in great numbers, but it may be helpful to consider two different types of letters. Suppose the task the letter is to perform is to help in the sale of a gas engine to a farmer. The man who doesn't take any interest in this "human interest stuff" writes:

"We believe you will agree with us that it is advisable for the farmer to replace hand labor with machinery, to just as great an extent as is possible. In accordance with this modern trend, a large number of the best farmers of this county are buying gasoline engines. If you will give the matter some careful thought, you will undoubtedly realize that an engine would prove a profitable investment for you.

"We are the manufacturers of a gasoline engine which has received the encomiums of a multitude of farmers. Our Superior engine is constructed in a modern factory of the very best of materials, and there is no other engine made today, regardless of price, of equal quality. The reputation which our products have earned during the past twenty-five years is sufficient guarantee that you will get satisfactory service from a Superior engine.

"The catalog, which we are sending you under separate cover, will inform you regarding the construction of our engine, and give you an idea as to why you will make a serious mistake if you buy any other make of engine. A gasoline engine will save you much onerous labor and you should not do without one any longer.

"Superior engines are handled by Smith Brothers, in Warsaw, and you will be able to secure whatever size engine you may desire from them at any time."

But, here's another man who feels that the only way a letter can create desire is to get a lot of human interest down on the paper and he writes:

"What would it mean to you to have a 'farm hand' that for a few cents a day would pump the water for the stock, saw the wood and grind the feed, without grumbling or grouching, eating its head off, or loafing on the job?

"A Superior gasoline engine will take care of all of these jobs and a lot of others, and keep on taking care of them day by day for a good many years. Jasper White, who lives eight miles south of Warsaw, wrote us a few weeks ago that he has been using one of our engines practically every day for five years, and during that time has only been out $3.25 for repairs.

"Superior engines are simple in construction and easy to start, hot or cold, wet or dry. It doesn't take an engineer to handle one. All you need is the complete instruction book which comes with every engine. Of course, any piece of machinery will soon be harmed by neglect or abuse, but a Superior engine requires very little attention. Read the enclosed booklet and

you will understand why they have earned the reputation of being exceedingly sturdy and long-lived.

"With farm labor scarce and high-priced, a good gasoline engine will soon save enough in time and labor to pay for itself. It will make life easier and more comfortable for the whole family.

"The next time you are in Warsaw why not stop at Smith Brothers and let them show you a Superior engine? They will be glad to talk things over with you and suggest the size of engine which will handle the work you have to be done to the best advantage. They will also give you exact figures as to the cost of operation. You will be surprised at how little gas it takes to keep them going.

"Hundreds of farmers have told us they would not give up their Superior engine for many times its cost. With most farmers it is not a question of how they can afford one of these engines, but how they could afford to get along without one."

Chapter VII

Don't Write Like a Robot!

HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR PERSONALITY
AND AVOID THE ROUTINE RUT

If you are the fortunate possessor of "it" or the masculine equivalent therefor, and can get this personal magnetism into your letters, you will be able to secure returns considerably above the average. But, even if you do not happen to be a "good mixer" and do not make friends easily—(perhaps are inclined to be a little stiff and reserved in your contacts with your fellow men)—your letters need not be cold and lifeless. Make your reader feel you are a human being, not a Robot—get your personality into every paragraph.

An appeal to the head is never as effective as an appeal to the heart. It is much better to make your correspondent feel that you are interested in his welfare, have a genuine desire to be of service to him, than it is to impress him with the extent of your knowledge, or your ability to write faultless English. His own opinions are of much more importance to the prospect than are yours.

But, how does one go about getting his personality into the envelope? It may help you to think of certain of your acquaintances who have the happy faculty of winning the friendship of everyone with whom they come in contact. They are always cheerful, always greet you with a smile and a friendly word. They do not attempt to force upon you a consideration of their affairs, but rather encourage confidence, by displaying a genuine interest in yours. They listen with respectful attention to your views upon any subject—without relinquishing any of their own opinions—and always place a much higher value upon friendship than upon the winning of an argument. They make you feel that they are interested in your welfare, and are courteous under all conditions and circumstances. They are always natural and unaffected in manner, and never endeavor to imitate anyone else.

After all, getting personality into your letters only means being earnest and sincere, being yourself, saying what you mean in a simple, unaffected way. You can't write to a man just as you would talk to him. Listening to a few conversations, with this thought in mind, will convince you of that. But you can be yourself when you write, and not a copy of some one else. You can get a little life and warmth into your letters.

And that is "personality" enough. You don't want to make your reader think, "that is certainly a clever letter," nor "the fellow who wrote that must be a crackajack;" but, rather, "that's right, I can sell

that machine and make some good money on it," or "that's just what I have been wanting."

There is another way of looking at this thing of getting personality into the message. Emerson said something like this, "A business is always the lengthened shadow of one man."

In commenting on this, Hill said: "Let your letters correctly portray the man whose personality creates the 'extended shadow' of your business (and they naturally will do that, whether you realize it or not). Now if the 'shadow' is to be pleasing the man who creates it must also be pleasing. Go right back to the first cause and make your letters reflect the character of the man who produces the extended shadow that is represented, in part, by you. If that man's personality and business policies aren't right, they will have to be made right before it is possible to make satisfied customers, through letters or any other way."

Consider the experience of a man, who had received some clever letters from a firm of printers, dwelling at length upon the character of the service they were prepared to give. Being in need of some printing one day, this man called up the printers in question, and here is his experience:

"Hello, is this the Quality Print Shop?"
Voice: "Yes, sir."
"This is Smith & Brown. Can you send a man over right away to give us a price on a job of printing?"

Voice: "Well, there's no one here just now. I'm the foreman of the composing room."

"Will you have some one come over soon?"

Voice: "Well, I'll tell them about it and I reckon some one can get over there tomorrow."

After waiting two or three days for a representative of the printing company to show up, the somewhat impatient business man again got them on the telephone.

"Monday morning I called you people up and told you that I wanted your prices on a job of work. This happens to be a rush job and if you are too busy to take care of it for us, I will see if there are some printers in town who can give us a little service. When can we expect to hear from you?"

Voice: "It must have been someone else that took your message. This is the first I have heard of it, but I'll see if we can't arrange to take care of you."

"Yes; well what I want to know is whether or not you are going to send someone over to see me—not tomorrow or next week, but today."

Voice: "Well, you see, I don't have anything to do with that part of it. Our salesmen are all out now, but I'll see if I can find someone to take care of you."

"You needn't mind. If this is an example of the kind of service you give, I don't want any of it."

Voice: "All right. Good bye."

Take your own experience. How often has it happened that you have been induced to go to some particular store because you had been convinced by their advertising that you could expect to receive exceptionally good service there. You step inside and look as much like a prospective buyer as you can.

One clerk has his back turned to you and is seemingly intensely interested in checking up his stock. Down at the far end of the counter three other employees have their heads together and apparently do not care to have their intimate conversation interrupted.

You stand around first on one foot and then on the other, cough inquiringly once or twice, get embarrassed, gaze intently at a display of ladies' lingerie, and finally despairing of getting any attention turn to go. Just then the clerk nearest to you turns around and inquires in a cold and haughty voice, "May I serve you?"

"Well, I would like to see some of the thingabobs which are being advertised in the Monday Morning Stake."

He looks at you as if to say, "Why you poor boob," and replies audibly, "Sorry, sir, but we found that the thingabobs to which you refer are not of the quality to appeal to our trade."

"Yes; anyway I am interested in examining one. Would it be possible for you to order one for me?"

"I am afraid not. You should be able to select something from our remarkably complete stock which will meet your requirements."

Somewhat exaggerated, but you get the idea. It makes but little difference how good the letters may be that a firm sends out, if it fails to live up to the promises that are made. Performance is always

much more important in the building of a business than promises.

On the other hand, no matter how attractive a firm's goods may be, nor how satisfactory the service they are prepared to offer, if their sales correspondents send out uncourteous, poorly written, uninteresting, weak letters, the readers will get an erroneous conception of the firm, and will not be inclined to try out either the goods or the service offered.

Chapter VIII

39 "Talking Points" and How to Use Them

FOR THE DICTATOR WHO WONDERS, "WHAT IS THERE TO TALK ABOUT, ANYWAY?"

A man who is genuinely enthusiastic about the goods and service which his firm has to offer is seldom at a loss for something to say in his letters. However, an outline of talking points may suggest some ideas to you which will lend variety to your correspondence.

In Connection with Dealers or Prospective Users:

1. The problems of dealers and suggestions for their solution.
2. What other merchants in the same line are doing to stimulate business.
3. Suggestions as to the arrangement of stock, window displays, training of clerks, etc.
4. Suggestions as to the handling, operating, or servicing of your products.
5. How your products will meet certain specific needs or desires.

6. Inquiry as to the reader's experience with your goods or service.
7. Plans for the future.
8. Experience of others with your products.
9. Information of interest from the reports of salesmen and newspapers.
10. Results of investigations made.
11. New products, new equipment, new methods.
12. House policy, terms, prices, etc.
13. Sales cooperation offered.

The Product:

14. Materials used, kind and quality.
15. Interesting facts concerning sources of supply, handling, etc.
16. Comparative costs of materials.
17. Equipment of factory.
18. Character of workmen.
19. Methods and processes used.
20. How inspected and tested.
21. What product will do for owner or user.
22. How and why it does it cheaper and better.

Advertising:

23. Why advertising is used.
24. Character and kinds of advertising and mediums used.
25. What advertising is expected to accomplish.
26. How dealer can "tie" in with this advertising.

27. Evidence of effectiveness of advertising.
28. Advertising cooperation offered.

Service:

29. Service that can be given.
30. Approximate date of shipment after receipt of order.
31. How orders are handled.
32. How goods are packed.
33. Reasons why first-class service can be given.

General:

34. Anecdotes applicable to the subject being discussed.
35. Items of interest from newspapers and magazines.
36. Facts regarding new inventions and discoveries.
37. Crop conditions.
38. Trends of business.
39. Thoughts originating at theatres, picture shows and in conversations.

How can you use these subjects to advantage in your letters? Here are a few examples which may help you in working these subjects into your letters. With a few changes these paragraphs can be made to apply to almost any business. The numbers used refer to the numbered list of suggestions just preceding.

1. "Bargains are still 'good bait,' but fewer people

are studying price tags today than ever before. You may not be able to meet the prices of your chain store competitors, but you can go a great deal farther toward meeting the individual needs and desires of the people of your city. You can offer goods of distinction in such an attractive way that price will be a secondary consideration."

2. "Down in Sarcoxie the Jenkins Quality Grocery has built up a profitable trade by carrying in stock a line of imported goods, which can not be found elsewhere in the city. Let us tell you of a plan which will enable you to win the custom of many of the leading citizens of your town."

5. "Tom Marshall once said that what the country needed was a good five-cent cigar. If you have some customers who feel the same way you can satisfy their longings with our 'Smokewells.' "

7. "You have built up a good trade on our ..... We don't know how we can better show our appreciation than by helping you do a still better business this year. After two years of investigation and experimentation we have succeeded in making some changes and improvements which will practically eliminate competition—and the price will remain the same. Here's what we have done:".

8. " 'Does the work of three men!' That's what The Merton Works, of Beeville, wrote us, after installing our lift trucks. Their experience should be of considerable interest to you because they were up against conditions similar to those which exist in your

factory. Here's the way in which they are making these trucks show a big profit:".

9. " 'The coldest January Kansas has experienced since 1918.' So read a recent newspaper item. With the Central States suffering from one blizzard after another, wool blankets are going to be in demand. Right now we are in a position to make prompt shipment of a line of particularly attractive all-wool blankets at a special price."

15. "The other day a man asked me, 'Isn't your price a little high?' When I got through telling him from how many different countries our materials came, through how many hands they passed, and the processes involved between raw materials and the finished product, he exclaimed, 'How in the world can you sell it so cheaply?' Some of your customers may be interested, so here's the story:".

18. "A certain brand of condensed milk is said to be better because it comes from 'contented cows.' There is no question about the superiority of goods produced by contented workmen. It would almost break the heart of some of our faithful employees to have anything go out of the factory that fell below the high standard we have set. Jacob Lossing has been foreman of our polishing department for fifteen years. We have many other employees who have been with us almost as long. We hire only skilled workmen of good character and we get the best work of which they are capable."

20. "There's a reason for the superior quality of

Burton Business Bodies. Our inspectors get right out in the woods to select the right kind of timber. Every piece which comes into the factory is carefully examined and any that is inferior rejected. All material is carefully inspected and tested and every operation is carefully supervised. Each of our business bodies is set up, with each bolt and nut in place, before it is knocked down and crated for shipment."

21. "Is the pleasure of serving a delicious meal to your family and friends often marred by the thought of the huge pile of dishes that must be taken care of afterward? Dish-washing is a disagreeable task and it is hard on delicate hands. Can you think of anything that would save you more time, trouble and annoyance than a dish-washing machine that really performs perfectly?"

23. "Ask a dozen men, 'What is the highest mountain in the United States?' and a good many will reply, 'Pike's Peak' although that isn't the correct answer. Here you see the result of advertising. Ask the man on the street what the best product in any line is and almost invariably he will name an advertised article. A manufactured product is not really sold until it moves from the shelves of the dealers. We are putting $———— into advertising this year because we know this will create consumer acceptance—make it possible for you to sell more ..... and with less sales effort."

26. "Were you ever sold on some article through advertising and then have trouble in finding a dealer

who carried it? There is the weak link in the chain of advertising. We are spending thousands of dollars each year to interest the people of this country in ..... In order to reap the full benefit from this advertising you must tie your store up with it, by letting the citizens of Arkwright know you handle our goods. Here is our plan:".

28. " 'You don't have to sell Blank engines, they sell themselves.' That's what Jenkins & Johnson, of Locktite, wrote us last week. We believe this is putting it a little too strong. There is no product so good that its sales can not be considerably increased by the use of the right kind of sales effort and advertising. That's why we have worked out a plan for cooperating with our dealers in sending out to prospective engine buyers some attractive, convincing, persuasive direct mail advertising."

29. "Shipment twenty-four hours after receipt of order! That's the kind of service we are prepared to give you. In these days of hand-to-mouth buying it is very essential that you be able to get the goods you need without delay. Barring fires, earthquakes and other unforeseen calamities, you won't have to worry about delayed shipments when you order from us."

33. "The merchant who is located near a factory never has to worry about prompt delivery on orders from that source. But it's different when shipment has to be made from half-way across the continent. That is why we have established warehouses throughout the country. When you need anything in our

line, you can depend upon immediate shipment from our warehouse in ....."

34. "The other day Mose, who is a field hand on a Southern Plantation, asked the overseer to get him a marriage license. When the license was handed to Mose he studied it a moment and then said, "Boss, you done made a mistake. I wants to marry the wash lady, not the cook.'

" 'All right, Mose,' said the overseer, 'I'll be going to the county seat again in a few days and I will get you another license then. It will cost you $2.00.' Mose scratched his head and shuffled his feet around in token of deep thought, then replied. 'You don't need to never mind, Boss. There ain't no $2.00 difference between them two niggers, nohow.'

"That's the way some people feel about the different makes of ..... on the market today: 'There's no difference between them.' But ..... *is* different. There are a half dozen reasons why it stands out from competitive products. And here they are:".

35. "On the 'Map of the Nation's Business' as it appeared in the February issue of 'Nation's Business,' the territory from which you draw your business is shown white. Business is declared to be good in that section. It's an old, old saying, but a true one, about striking while the iron is hot. Your customers are probably feeling more prosperous now than they have

for some time past. Now is the time to handle and push those products which have a quality, rather than a price appeal."

36. "Is the time coming when all you will have to do in order to get your housework done is to press a series of buttons? Last week there was demonstrated before the Kiwanis Club a mechanical 'man,' which turned lights on and off, operated an electric fan, a vacuum sweeper and an electric washing machine, following instructions given by blowing a whistle over the telephone.

"It will probably be some time yet before you can entrust your housework to robots, but an oil burner operates entirely without personal supervision. You don't even have to do any whistling to keep your house warm and comfortable day and night."

39. "The other day, while on the train, I overheard one charming young wife announce to another, equally as charming: 'John is the kindest husband in the world, but he just can't seem to remember when I have a birthday, or when our wedding anniversary comes around. I can't help feeling a little hurt sometimes.'

"How about you? Do you forget, too? Why not let us place on file the names of the dear ones you want to remember with a gift on certain special occasion? Without any trouble or worry on your part, we will mail out a box of delicious candy—of what-

ever size you specify—on the proper date. And we will phone you that we have done so, in order that you may follow up the gift with appropriate good wishes in person."

Chapter IX

Why Your Letters Falter and Fail

Ten common mistakes that you need never make again

1. The inexperienced dictators of business letters—as well as some with experience—finding it somewhat difficult to express their thoughts, perhaps embarrassed by the sound of their voices, use entirely too many words. They explain at length some feature of the product they are trying to sell, and then feel it necessary to go ahead and explain their explanation. They do not understand that they can paint a clearer and more vivid picture with a few well-chosen words than they can with many weak and uninteresting ones.

A limited vocabulary is a considerable handicap to the dictator, because it makes difficult the expression of the more delicate shades of meaning. It is so easy to overwork certain words and phrases.

Great improvement can be made by doing as much reading as possible, seizing upon and making

your own such words as you feel are especially forceful and expressive. It is not possible to spend much time in research for the right word while dictating, but every opportunity should be taken advantage of in experimenting as to the simplest, clearest expression of a certain thought.

2. The inexperienced dictator often finds it difficult to get away from himself. He views everything in the light of his own experiences. His letters are colored by his own opinions and prejudices, his likes and dislikes. He fails to realize that what he thinks is of very little importance, as compared with what his correspondent thinks.

He feels that the more words of praise he can get into a letter concerning his firm and its products, the more favorably the prospect will be impressed. It should be remembered that the individuals who are the most highly esteemed by their fellow men are not those who are constantly indulging in self-praise, but the men whose good qualities are read in their actions. Write about what your product will do and has done, in such a way that your reader will infer its good qualities and give it the praise which is its due.

As the poet remarked about the maid, "If she be not fair to me, what care I how fair she be?" Your prospect cares nothing about the goodness of your product unless it be good for him. Forget yourself in thoughts about the man to whom you are writing.

3. The inexperienced correspondent generally feels

that what he knows to be true about the goods or service of his firm will be accepted as being true by his correspondent. He makes statements regarding his goods which are sure to engender questions in the mind of his reader, without offering any proof in support of his assertions.

To say that your goods are "the best" doesn't give any information of value to the man to whom you are writing. If you expect him to accept this statement as true, you must follow it up with reasons as to why they are entitled to be considered "the best"—best at least for the prospect. When you make a claim, substantiate it with proof. The best evidence you can offer a prospective buyer as to why your product is best for him is a specific statement of what it will do, and what it has done for others in similar circumstances.

4. While the inexperienced dictator may know what he wants to say in reply to a certain letter, and may think that he has said it, when he reads his letter over after transcription he often finds that he has failed to get his thought clearly on paper.

A plan that will be of some help in such cases, is to study the carbons of your letters, and practice on rewriting such paragraphs as are unsatisfactory until you feel you have expressed what you have to say in the simplest, most forceful manner possible.

5. The inexperienced dictator fails to differentiate between the prospect who is already familiar with

and desires a product similar to that to be sold, and the prospect in whom desire must first be created.

He is likely to endeavor to sell a pound of candy at so much a pound, either by emphasizing the price, or quality due to fine ingredients and superior workmanship. And these are "reason-why" appeals that can well be used in selling the man who is the market for a pound of candy. But in order to sell to that large class of prospects, who are "luke warm" on the purchase of candy, the dictator must arouse desire by appealing to the emotions; by writing of the suitability of candy for birthday and other anniversary gifts; the especial pleasure a woman takes in a gift of candy; of the merits of candy as a producer of energy, etc.

This is true to an even greater degree of a product which is new on the market. How large a business do you think the National Cash Register Company could have built up, if they had attempted to sell cash registers by confining their appeals to the quality of the materials used, the workmanship, the number and kind of parts, the beautiful finish and the ease of operation?

6. The inexperienced dictator often uses words which may mean one thing to him and something else to the reader; or he overlooks the fact that it is possible to make a statement in a way which will be offensive to the reader, as, for example:

"Of course, colored shirts are never worn with full dress."

"A study of this book will enable you to avoid embarrassing social errors."

"By following the instructions of our sales promotion department, you will be able to duplicate the success of these live merchants."

7. The inexperienced dictator often picks up a letter and starts to dictate with only one brief thought in mind. He then gropes for another and probably thinks of something that has but little connection with his opening sentence. Instead of leading his reader steadily along a straight path to a pre-determined destination, he stops, retraces his steps, wanders off into byways, and finally becomes lost in a meaningless maze of words.

Study the letter you have in hand until you have decided upon just how you are going to reply; what points it will be advisable to cover and the order in which you will take them up. Develop one link in your chain of thought and then go on to the next. Don't dictate a single sentence until you have some idea of what you are going to say—although in a majority of cases the full measure of inspiration does not come until one is well along into the letter.

8. The inexperienced dictator often lacks patience. He feels that he must force the reader to an immediate conclusion. He tries to drive, rather than lead. He has been oversold on the idea of putting a "punch" into his letters. He uses so much "ginger" that it irritates the palate of many prospects.

Some of the most successful letters ever written

were those which depended almost entirely upon the power of suggestion. They didn't tell the prospect to do anything, nor even dwell upon the penalties inherent in his failure to do a certain thing. They simply suggested that, at the end of a road, smooth and safe and easy to travel, there could be found a certain thing much to be desired. It is sometimes possible to make an article seem more desirable by pointing out that it is somewhat difficult of attainment. It is a trait common to a majority of us to want most that which we are told is a little beyond our reach. The apple away up in the tree out of reach always seems larger and more delectable than those that hang close at hand.

9. The inexperienced dictator often feels that just because he is enthusiastic about the product he is endeavoring to sell, his prospect is sure to be interested, and that all he needs to do is to describe it.

If a man is definitely contemplating the purchase of an article, it is not necessary to do much more than give a complete description and quote a price. But, if you are presenting an unfamiliar product to him, or it is necessary to create desire, you must first get him interested before he will be willing to listen to what you have to say.

If you are describing a ball game, a prize fight, a particularly fine sermon or the landing of a big fish, your story is full of life, color, enthusiasm. You paint such a vivid word picture that your friend feels in some degree the same emotions originally felt by you.

If you can get some of this same enthusiasm, genuine interest, humanness and vividness of description into your sales letters, they are sure to get results.

Most dictators realize the importance of getting attention in the opening paragraph, but fail to realize that from this attention-getting paragraph they must gently lead their prospect up to their selling points.

10. The inexperienced dictator has a tendency to judge other men by his own mental standards. He feels that what interests him will also interest his prospect; that what is clear to him must also be clear to his reader.

A story is told of a certain British bishop, visiting a young preacher in his first church, who said to the young man that his method of preaching was not getting results. The bishop volunteered to preach a sermon to show how it ought to be done. He took as a text: "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." When he had finished, a humble parishioner was asked by the beaming bishop how he liked the sermon.

"It were very fine," said the parishioner, "but somehow in spite of all you said I still believe there do be a God."

You can not produce good letters until you learn to submerge your own opinions, views and prejudices and think only of placing yourself in mental accord with your prospect.

In going over a large number of dictated letters,

written by several different correspondents, the most apparent faults were:

1. The use of meaningless and worn-out phrases. It is so much easier to use familiar words and phrases—those which come trippingly from the tongue—than it is to prod a lazy brain in order to induce it to find some new and interesting way of expressing a thought. In spite of all that has been said and written on the subject, many dictators cling to such terms as:

"Your letter of the 5th inst. received and will have our immediate attention."

"In reply to your letter of recent date, we beg to advise."

"Thanking you for your order and trusting to be favored with further business, we are."

The correspondent of a large business concern had been invited out to dinner by a friend. At the table the host asked him to say grace. It was a new experience, but he was not to be found wanting.

"Dear Lord," he began, "we thank Thee for all Thy favors of recent date. Permit us to express our heartfelt gratitude. We trust that we may continue to merit Your confidence and that we shall receive many more blessings from You in the near future. Amen."

2. Many otherwise good letters are confusing to the reader because of the multiplicity of ideas they endeavor to convey. Many dictators feel that the more they can tell a prospect about their product, the

stronger the desire created; but it is impossible to produce a mental reaction such as results when a salesman lays ten or fifteen beautiful ties before us from which to make our choice.

A sales letter should always give the prospect a clear understanding of the product offered for sale and the service which it will perform, but it is a mistake to go into tiresome detail. Haven't you often observed how the great artist will outline an object with a few sweeping lines and leave the imagination of the beholder to fill in the details?

3. Too many letters are full of meaningless claims and generalities.

It doesn't mean much to a business man for you to say: "This machine will save you hundreds of dollars," if you fail to show him how and why this is true. Don't say, "Our paint will cover more surface," and stop. State just how much surface a gallon of your paint will cover. Don't say, "You will find dozens of uses for this machine," but state definitely all of the uses to which your product can be put.

4. Many letters get attention and awaken interest, but fail to get results because they contain no urge to action. Some dictators are like some salesmen, they can do everything except get the name on the dotted line.

Like a good story, a sales letter should work up to a climax, and an effort should be made to have the concluding paragraph one of the strongest and most

persuasive of the entire letter. How can you hope to accomplish anything with a letter which ends, "Trusting that we have given you the information you desire and hoping to receive your order soon, we are," Leave one of the strongest reasons why the prospect should buy for the conclusion of your letter, and endeavor to offer some good reason why he should buy without delay.

5. "We" letters still greatly outnumber "you" letters. This does not mean that it is wrong to use "I" or "we," or "us," but a disagreeable impression is always produced by a letter in which almost every paragraph starts with "I" or "We."

Too much emphasis can not be given to the importance of the dictator thinking constantly of the man to whom he is writing, and showing how the product to be sold is adapted to his needs and desires. Who are the greatest bores you know? Always talking about themselves, aren't they? After all, the most interesting topic of conversation for all of us is—ourselves.

In writing clear and forceful letters, the first thing to consider is the choice of words. A study of synonyms will be of help along that line. It is sometimes necessary to use a long word in order to properly express your meaning, but the short Anglo-Saxon words should be given preference.

Agree or assent are better than acquiesce; similar or like, than analagous; home than residence or

habitation; salary or wages than remuneration; clear than pellucid; allow than sanction, and so on.

Just as an illustration of the many different adjectives which may be used in expressing a certain quality, here are some of the words practically synonomous with "fine":

Beautiful	Polished
Dainty	Pure
Delicate	Splendid
Elegant	Smart
Excellent	"Classy"
Exquisite	Lovely
Handsome	Delicate
Nice	Pretty

Short sentences are always more forceful than long ones, but a letter made up entirely of short sentences is too abrupt and jerky. A short sentence can be used as the blow which drives home the entering wedge of the longer and more explanatory sentence. Long sentences permit of leading up to a climax.

As an example of how much more clearly a thought can sometimes be expressed by the use of a few words, rather than many, take these two sentences from letters written by correspondence schools: (1) "Assuming that you are in search of valuable information that may increase your earning capacity by a more complete knowledge of any subject in which you may be interested, we desire to state most

emphatically that your remuneration increases with your accumulated knowledge." (2) "You can earn more as you learn more."

By reading good books and articles and stories in newspapers and magazines, written by those authors who dress their thoughts in particularly attractive and original manner; by setting down for future use striking words, expressive phrases and illuminating comparisons which come to your attention, whether printed or spoken; by practicing placing a thought in writing, and then revising until you are confident no further improvement is possible, you can acquire an individual "style" in writing, and it will be easy for you to dictate a letter upon almost any subject, which will definitely and persuasively express your personality.

Chapter X

"How Would You Answer That?"

SOME SUGGESTED REPLIES TO EVERYDAY BUSINESS LETTERS

Books and manuals on letter-writing generally contain examples of letters which have been more than ordinarily effective. Such sample letters are valuable chiefly because they give you an idea as to the essential ingredients of a successful letter. It is not often possible to lift sentences and paragraphs from such letters for your own use. Your letters should embody your own personality. Furthermore, whenever you write a reply to a letter you must take into consideration the policies of your company, the questions asked or implied by your correspondent, whatever knowledge concerning the writer it is possible to obtain, and the objective you hope to gain. Suppose, however, we consider possible answers to various letters:

You are the manufacturer of a comparatively high-priced incubator and are trying to get additional dealers to handle your line. You receive a letter which reads:

"Gentlemen: You have written me several times, suggesting that I handle your line of incubators. I am always glad to take on any line which I think will make me some money, but I can't see where incubators would do it. I bought three from the Hostetter people once and carried them in stock for a couple of years. Finally I got tired of seeing them sitting around and practically gave them away.

"Our people here in this country don't figure on going into the poultry business very heavy and it looks to me like a big job to try and convince them that they can afford to pay out a lot of money for an incubator to do the work for the hens.

"Your incubator costs too much money anyway. There are a lot of good makes I can buy cheaper than yours. Very truly, Bill Jones."

Sounds anything but favorable, doesn't it? And yet, you have already gone far toward selling Bill, because you have interested him enough to have him come right out in the open with his objections. And what are they?

1. He has already had an unprofitable experience with incubators.

2. He thinks hatching chickens is the business of the hens.

3. He thinks your prices too high.

4. He feels that there is no demand for incubators among the people in his trade territory.

It won't do to tell Bill plainly that he doesn't know what he is talking about and why. We must show him that he is mistaken, but try and do it in a

way that will make him feel that he was in accord with you all the time. How would these opening paragraphs do?

"What you say in your letter of January 10th about the people in your country not wanting incubators made me think of the days long ago, when the farmers wanted laws passed to keep automobiles off the roads.

"You are surely right in figuring that you can't afford to tie up any of your capital in goods that won't move off your shelves. But, as a successful merchant, you know that you can sell ANYTHING which you can show your customers means more dollars in their pockets. Incubators are being sold by the thousands, in all kinds of places and to all sorts of people. Don't you believe the main reason your people are not interested in incubators is that they do not realize what they mean in the way of increased cash income?

"We have an idea that the wives, or daughters, of practically all of the farmers in your territory have some chickens, and depend upon them for 'pin money.' You will find it very easy to interest these women in incubators when you show them that they mean more money out of their chickens."

This should get Bill to thinking over the proposition again, but he is probably still somewhat sceptical. He may be thinking, "That's easy enough to say, but if you had this store you probably wouldn't be selling incubators either." What is needed now is a little concrete evidence, so we continue:

"Bailey and Bertram are running a store at Colton, a town about the size of yours and in a farming community. In 1925 they sold five Sureshot incubators; in 1926, twelve; in 1927, twenty-one. Copy of one of their recent letters to us is enclosed.

"They worked up this profitable business by talking incubators to the people who came into their store; by keeping a sample constantly on display and by occasionally bringing off a hatch in their store window. They convinced their customers that a Sureshot incubator meant more chickens, earlier friers—and keeping the hens on the egg-laying job. It wasn't long until they could refer to a number of satisfied users who knew their incubators had made them money."

And now what can be said to overcome the high price objection? You can talk about superior materials and workmanship, special features—and most important of all—the reasons why your incubators give more profitable results:

"Sureshot incubators do cost more money than the ordinary incubator, but there are good reasons why they are worth more. They last longer, are simpler and easier to handle and hatch a larger percentage of the eggs. The real profit from an incubator does not lie in saving a few dollars on the purchase price, but in getting more chicks—healthier chicks—at a lower cost of operation. After you go over the enclosed catalog you will understand why our incubator is not, and never could be, a 'cheap one.'"

By this time we should have Bill feeling that maybe he could sell a few incubators. The next step is to try to induce him to order out some samples:

"We are so confident that a few of our incubators at work in your territory would be fine advertising for us, and make it easy for you to sell *more* incubators, that we are going to make you a special introductory offer:

"Place your order with us now for six Sureshot Incubators, four of the fifty-egg size and two of the 100-egg size, and we will give you 90-day dating on the order. Our sales promotion department will supply you with some attractive folders for distribution, and write a friendly letter to one-hundred prospective purchasers inviting them to call at your store and examine the Sureshot incubator. All you need do is supply us with their names and addresses.

"This offer will be withdrawn after February 1st and our regular terms of thirty days net will be in force. Now is the best time of the year to sell incubators, and we will be much surprised if you do not find buyers for all six incubators before payment is due. Use the enclosed order blank."

If you were a manufacturer of business bodies to be used on the Chevrolet truck chassis, which sold for quite a little more money than similar bodies put out by other manufacturers, how would you answer letters like this:

"Gentlemen: Once in a while we have a call for a business body for the Chevrolet truck and we have heard that your line is a good one. What we want is

something with which we can meet the competition of the Ford dealer here.

"We will not stock any bodies, but if you can give us what our customers want we will do some business with you, and have you ship the body after we make the sale.

"Send us your catalog and quote rock bottom prices. Very truly yours, Green & Gray."

You investigate and find that Green & Gray have a good credit rating and are located in a thriving little city of 25,000 population. They are the only Chevrolet dealers in Bunceton and you have never sold any bodies there. Here is a chance to introduce your line and build up a business in that territory.

You want to convince Green & Gray not only that they can sell Salton bodies at quality prices, but also that it will pay them to carry at least one body in stock. Let's see, do they say anything in their letter which will give us a hold in starting to wrestle with them? Yes, here it is! They say that they want something that will enable them to meet the competition of the Ford dealer, so we write:

"Your letter was most welcome because we know that you can build up a truck business that will add a good many dollars to your yearly profits. Of course, as you say, you want to take care of your customers when they need a business body, but why not go considerably farther than that? Why not sell the business men of your territory COMPLETE TRUCKS—a first class business body mounted on the Chevrolet chassis?

"You say you want something that will enable you to meet the competition of the Ford dealer—why try to meet this competition on a price basis? You are selling lots of Chevrolet cars, but you have never yet sold one to a man who considered the price above everything else, because your car is NOT the cheapest one on the market. Exactly the same reasons that enable you to sell Chevrolet passenger cars, in competition with a car at a lower price, will get the order for you on a truck equipped with one of our business bodies.

"You know how it is yourself. When you start out to buy a hat, a pair of shoes or a suit of clothes, you probably have a certain price in mind, but you don't hesitate long about paying a few dollars more, if you feel that this extra amount insures a good fit, a pleasing appearance and long wear. A sensible man seeks value rather than price.

"You can show the merchants of your city how a Chevrolet truck will save on their delivery costs, extend their trade territory, enable them to give better service to their customers and build prestige for their store.

"And when a business man begins figuring on buying a truck, he is not going to consider price alone, but also materials, workmanship, appearance, length of service that may reasonably be expected and the probable upkeep cost. Business men buy our bodies in preference to other makes because they have a beauty of line and finish which is sure to attract favorable attention. A Salton body with a firm name neatly lettered upon it, is a splendid form of advertising—a moving billboard.

"They buy Salton bodies because they are constructed of good materials throughout, and so ironed

and braced as to prevent racking. Take time to go carefully over the catalog, which accompanies this letter, and you will secure sufficient facts concerning the construction features of our bodies to enable you to convince prospective customers that they will actually be saving money, in the long run, by paying a little more for a Salton body.

"You can sell bodies from our catalog—sometimes. You can sell a lot more by exhibiting the complete truck. Get one or two Salton bodies and mount them on the chassis for exhibition to prospective customers. Pictures help some, but almost any make of body looks good in a picture. It is only by actual examination that a realization of the staunchness of the Salton bodies and their wonderfully attractive appearance, is gained.

"Weaver Brothers, Chevrolet dealers at Reardon, sold fifteen trucks, equipped with Salton bodies, in six months by having a salesman drive their sample truck around to the department stores, clothiers, laundrymen, bakers, florists and other business concerns. Our No. 47 panel body is ideal for the class of concerns listed above, where it is important that goods be protected from dust, dirt and moisture.

"Salton business bodies are sold exclusively through Chevrolet dealers, and they are so distinctively different in appearance that they are quickly recognized wherever seen. It will be mighty fine advertising for you to have folks on the street saying, 'There goes another one of those good-looking Chevrolet trucks.'

"There will be a lot of trucks sold in your territory during the next few years. Why not select from our catalog one or two styles that you believe will take best with your trade, and let us get them out to you

right away? There is no reason why you should not get a large share of this profitable business. And now is the time to get started, before some other dealer gets the cream of it."

While this letter should produce a favorable impression and make Green & Gray feel that your line might make them some money, a number of follow-up letters will probably be necessary before they finally decide to carry a few of your bodies in stock. A salesman often calls several times before he secures his first order, and personal salesmanship is always more effective than written salesmanship.

But, even where a salesman is scheduled for a call, carefully constructed, interesting letters will considerably reduce the time the salesman requires to close a deal. A series of strong letters will often secure a worth-while order, and line up a new customer, *without* a call from a salesman.

In the face of the keenest competition that America has ever known, the average salesman has a hard fight on his hands to secure sufficient business to justify keeping him out on the territory. With many firms watching increased volume fail to bring increased profits, the thought constantly before them is "How can we reduce selling expenses?" Anything is worthy of consideration which will cut down the number of calls a salesman must make before securing the order; which will, to a certain extent, eliminate introductory talk and explanation—shorten the path to be traveled between approach and closing—and so make

it possible for the salesman to call upon more prospects. Much can be accomplished along that line by the consistent use of letters.

If a salesman is calling upon men who are not acquainted with the house he represents, nor the goods that he is selling; if a certain degree of consumer-acceptance has not been gained through advertising; if the goods he handles are very similar to those of competitors; if he must sell at a higher price than that asked for competing goods—then he needs all of the help his house can give him. Letters which will build confidence in the firm, introduce the salesman, explain the goods to be sold, gain the salesman a hearing and enable him to devote the time he is granted to actual selling, will prove a big factor in the reduction of sales expense.

Salesmen are often not in sympathy with sales promotion work of this character. They doubt its efficiency. They feel that, in a way, the sales promotion man is "butting in" on their business. They fear that proper credit will not be given them for the orders such letters sometimes bring in from their territory by mail. Diplomacy and tact will do much toward overcoming this opposition, and it is possible to obtain results which will ultimately secure the full cooperation of the sales force. A letter something after this style should help in putting such a sales promotion plan into operation:

"Dear Mr. Jones: You have been sending in some good orders from your territory. But a salesman of

your caliber is never entirely satisfied. Like Oliver Twist, you are always hungry for 'more.'

"Haven't you often wished that there were more hours in the day so that you would have time for calling on more dealers; that there could be found some plan which would enable you to get the name on the dotted line without so much time devoted to education and explanation? Haven't you often thought how much it would help to be able to talk to some almost-persuaded customer the next day after your call, bringing out some point that you overlooked or hadn't the time to stress during the interview?

"With just one thought in mind—to make it possible for you to increase the volume of business you are now securing—we have arranged for Joseph C. Brown, formerly with the Atlas Corporation, of Chicago, to take charge of our sales promotion work, giving especial attention to preceding and following-up the calls of our salesmen. Mr. Brown writes the kind of letters that win friendship and build good will—for you as well as for the house. He will prepare the way for your coming and insure favorable attention for you. He will acquaint prospective buyers with the standing of our firm, the merits of our line and the character of service we offer.

"It is not our intention to endeavor to build up a mail order business, but we hope to induce your customers to send in their orders by mail between your calls, instead of giving them to some other salesman who happens along just as they want to replenish their stock of some product. You will receive full credit for every order mailed in from your territory. Remember, Brown will have just one idea in mind and that is to help our salesmen sell more goods. His success is dependent upon *your* success.

"You have demonstrated that you can get business without this cooperation. You can get more business *with* it. But your help is very essential to the success of the plan. Look over the enclosed blank. It will take only a few minutes of your time to fill it out, and it gives us the specific information concerning our present dealers—and those you would like to see line up as our dealers—which is essential to the writing of effective letters.

"I am convinced that you are going to be pleasantly surprised at the real practical help you will get from friendly personal letters, full of human interest and the spirit of service. We are depending upon you to help us put this plan over—BIG. Let's get started right away!"

A salesman comparatively new on the territory sends in a report on Jack Swartz, of Roundsville, stating that he is the leading grocer of that city, buying chiefly from Crux & Co. "Seems to think we are too small fry to deserve consideration. Can't get him to talk much. Has several cases our Superior line canned goods on hand with wrappers soiled and dingy. Write him about service."

Here is an opportunity for the sales promotion man to show whether it is possible to write a letter to Swartz that will make the going a little less rough for the salesman. After careful thought he writes as follows:

"Dear Mr. Swartz: Tom Green writes that when he called on you recently he found that you had in stock several cases of our Superior brand of canned

fruit, most of the cans having soiled wrappers. As long as this stock stays on your shelves it is not making any money for either of us. Will you do this:

"Return all of these cans to us, at our expense, and we will replace the entire lot with fresh stock, on which the wrappers are bright and clean. No, don't return them all. Keep out a few cans and try them on your own table. Convince yourself that you can recommend this line to your customers. We are proud of this Superior line of ours and eager to have you give it a fair chance to demonstrate its merit.

"Up here in Griswold there is a big department store, which carries a full line of men's clothing, shoes, hats, etc., but when I want something of this kind I generally drop in at a small store a few blocks away from our building.

"Why? Because I save time. Because the owner of this store and his clerks make me feel that they are sincerely glad to have my patronage. Because they are willing to go to a lot of trouble to give me just what I want. Because their goods are sold at fair prices, and I can always depend upon getting *immediate and efficient service.*

"We size up rather small, compared with some of the wholesale houses of the Southwest, but this very smallness helps us to give individual, personal attention to the needs of each of our customers. In fact the merchants who buy from us are more than customers—they are friends. 'Business is business' but these men like to deal with us because they have found that we do not hesitate about putting forth extra effort to see that they get what they want when they want it.

"Other things being anywhere near equal, we believe that you will find it profitable to buy at least a

part of your stock from us. Turnover is recognized as being one of the chief factors of success in present day merchandising. Have you considered that our location, so close to you, with the possibility of the delivery of your goods the day following the receipt of your order, means that you will be able to give your customers satisfactory service with a smaller stock, and so increase your turnover?

"As you will see from the enclosed price sheet we are fortunate in being able to quote you some very favorable prices on Gold Medal pickles and catsup, for immediate delivery.

"It is going to mean more profit for both of us to get together. All that we are asking now is a chance to show you that we can give you quicker, better service on your orders. How about a few cases of Gold Medal?"

The following letter illustrates how a sales promotion man might write to a list of banks in an endeavor to sell them on the advantages of marble interiors. This is one of a series intended to interest prospects to an extent that they will be ready to talk business with a salesman:

" 'By the way, Colonel Smith, I don't want you to leave town without seeing our First National Bank. You may have bigger banks in Chicago, but I don't believe you can show us anything finer.' What would it be worth to you to have your bank pointed out by the citizens of Anderson as one of the show places of the city?

"Of the millions expended annually in the United States for advertising a very large percentage is spent

in an endeavor to gain prestige in some particular field. And prestige probably means more to a bank than it does to any other business institution in the world.

"It has always been a trait of human nature to judge by appearances. So far the great financial institutions of the country have been unable to find anything which contributes more to 'appearance' than Vermont marble.

"There is something about marble that is suggestive of solidity, respectability and wealth. In no other building material known to mankind is such great beauty united with such superior durability.

"Our catalog not only sets forth in detail why the marble quarried from the rock-ribbed hills of Old Vermont is the choice of those who can afford the best, but also shows numerous photographs of interiors which have recently been fitted with Vermont marble.

"As this is a somewhat costly example of the printer's art, it is only mailed on request, but your name on the enclosed card will bring it to you by first mail.

"You will be surprised at what a reasonable cost you can dress your bank in a style befitting its high standing in the community."

Suppose you are interested in a drug store, which has just been opened up in a residence section of the city. You are sure to get a certain amount of trade from people who chance to pass by, but you want to let everyone within a reasonable trading radius know that you are open for business; get them to call at your store; get them interested in you and your busi-

ness. You can not use the newspapers to advantage because of waste circulation—at least ninety per cent of the readers live too far away to trade with you. So you take a city directory and work out a list of logical prospects, mailing out a letter like this:

"Right on the Corner of Grand and Hawthorne—
That's Us!

"Good Morning Mrs. .....

"We have a kindly feeling in our hearts for the whole world this morning. A lot of good fellows predicted that we were foolish to open up a drug store here; said we would starve to death in a little while. But the laugh is on them! It seems the folk in this part of town had just been waiting for a convenient place to drop in for those many articles that are generally wanted in a hurry.

"Sure, you can probably save a few cents by waiting until you are downtown, but you are not going to lose very much money through trading with us and think of the time and trouble you will save. We have two telephones—Main 3460 and 3461, so there won't be any delay when you want to order something sent out to your house.

"A certain rich man gave us a verbal slap on the wrist the other day when we refused to sell him a bottle of patent medicine at the price being quoted by a downtown store. But when we only charged twenty-five cents to fill a prescription for him he was pleasantly surprised. It cost him a dollar before—at the same place where he bought the patent medicine at a cut price.

"We want you to feel that we are 'home folks.' If there should be an emergency at your house and no

doctor immediately available, do not hesitate to call us and we will gladly do what we can to help.

"But let's not cross any bridges before we come to them. Let's drink and be merry. Anything that goes with a modern soda fountain we have. And Jack Hart, our jaunty dispenser of drinks, is a wizard in his line. Curb service, right now!

"Come on over and let's get acquainted. We are here to serve you and not to sell you."

No matter on what subject a letter is to be written, nor whether by a manufacturer selling through dealers, a wholesaler or retailer, it will be successful in direct ratio to the writer's ability to properly size up the person to whom he is writing, so as to be able to appeal to the emotions which govern his actions. A firm manufacturing vulcanizing outfits, instructing men in tire repairing and helping them to get started in that business, receives a letter reading as follows:

"Gentlemen: I have just been reading your advertisement in a magazine, advising men to get into the tire repair business and I would like to know something more about it.

"Right now I am anxious to get into something that will enable me to make more money, but I have a family to support and can't afford to take any risks. It seems to me that there ought to be good money in tire repairing, but I don't know a thing in the world about it and don't know that I could learn to do it.

"Do you think a man forty-eight years old is too old to get into this business? I have always worked for the other man, but would like to get into some-

thing for myself and I have a turn for mechanical work. Please let me hear from you right away."

This whole letter conveys an impression that this man is suffering from what the psychologists call an inferiority complex. He lacks self-confidence and is full of the fears that assail the unsuccessful. But there is still hope for him, because he has not entirely lost hope himself. He still has ambition, if not for himself, at least for his family. We must build up his self-confidence, make him feel that he can succeed, and at the same time give him the facts so that if he goes into this business he will do it with his eyes open. Here is the reply:

"Of course you are not too old to succeed in the tire repair business! Some of the most successful tire repair men we know are about your age—some considerably older. There's a folder enclosed giving the story of Martin Miller. At the age of fifty-two he bought a Rightway tire repair outfit, and now—three years later—he is clearing over $3,000 a year.

"You can do just as well if you have the backbone to banish your doubts and fears and go into this business with the determination to win out in spite of every obstacle. You must have sufficient strength, and the willingness to work long hours when you are getting started, and the courage to stick with it, even should things look dark for a little while.

"*Remember it is worth everything it costs to build up a permanent paying business of your own.*

"The tire repair business offers you an opportunity of making more money than you probably can

ever hope for in the form of salary. You can be your own boss. You can give your family the comforts and luxuries of life. You can well afford to make some sacrifices, and endure a few hardships, in order to reach that goal.

"Find out the number of cars running in your town and the surrounding country, then multiply this number by four and you will begin to realize the possibilities of the tire repair business. Hundreds of these tires will never go to a repair shop but you know that there are a great many people who are forced to hold the cost of operating their cars down just as low as possible. Show them how much money you can save them on tires and you will surely get their business.

"It is surprising how many men well able to buy tires at any time will have their tires repaired, as soon as you have demonstrated to them that the Rightway method of tire repairing makes it possible to guarantee several thousand additional miles from a damaged casing.

"If you become convinced that tire repairing does offer you the opportunity you have been seeking, don't let your lack of experience or knowledge of this business worry you. We have a school of tire repairing at our plant, and we also have a complete, easy-to-understand home study course in tire repairing. It is better to come to our school for personal instruction, if possible. There is no charge for tuition to the man who buys a tire repair outfit. But many of the successful tire repair men of the country learned the business with the help of our Home Study Course.

"This course not only covers every detail of tire repairing, but also gives valuable suggestions with re-

gard to selecting a location, plans for getting business, how to advertise, how to handle your trade, etc.

"Our catalog and price list accompany this letter. If you will tell us how much money you can invest in the tire repair business, we will have our experts select the best outfit for you, everything you will need in making a start in this business. You can depend upon our help, both before and after you buy your outfit. We will do our share toward helping you make your business a success—but the extent of your success is entirely dependent upon your own efforts.

"You say that you can not afford to take any risks. Man, nothing worth while was ever accomplished in this world without taking risks. We can not guarantee that you will make good money at tire repairing. We do guarantee to supply you with a vulcanizing machine, tools and materials of the highest quality and to give you full and complete instructions in tire repairing. We most sincerely believe that there is no other business you can get into, with the investment of such a small amount of money, which offers so good a chance for profit.

"If you feel that you can not afford to come to our factory and spend three or four weeks in our tire repair school, then we suggest that you send us $25.00 for our Home Study Course, which amount will be applied upon the price of any tire repair plant you may select later.

"This will enable you to start in right now learning how to cut down tires and get them ready for the machine. As soon as you have gone over the lessons in our course and practiced a little on junk tires, you are going to decide that you will have no trouble in learning how to repair tires. And you can feel fully assured that after you have mastered this course, a

little experience will be all that is necessary to enable you to turn out guaranteed work and give complete satisfaction to your customers.

"Why be contented to stay where you are when it is possible to do so much better, for yourself and for your family? Use the blank enclosed in sending for the Home Study Course and get started on the road to financial independence right away."

Let's take the case of a printer, one of several in a fairly large city. He gets a letter reading like this:

"With this letter I am handing you rough layout and copy for a broadside which we want to get out the first of next month. Please let us have your bid on 10,000. We have already obtained estimates from several other printing houses and you are going to have to get right down to bed rock if you want this job."

There are a good many printers who would respond to such a letter by quoting a price so low as to permit of no profit, just to keep "the other fellow" from getting the job. But the man who prefers to have his presses stand idle, rather than operate them at a loss, might figure that there was a chance of selling the writer of this letter on quality and service, and write as follows:

"You say in your letter of April 2nd that you want to get out a broadside the first of next month. Why?

"BECAUSE you expect that broadside to accom-

plish some specific purpose! If it does not accomplish that purpose, then it makes no difference what it may have cost you, your money is wasted. Isn't that true?

"Doesn't it follow logically that you want your broadside to be just as attractive in appearance, just as well printed, just as effective in every way as it is possible to make it?

"We thank you for giving us an opportunity of bidding on this job, but, in connection with the price we quote, we want you to take into consideration the fact that we never take a job at a price that prevents our giving it preferred attention, making it just as good a job as we possibly can. Most any print shop can put out a broadside, but we never ask a customer of ours to accept anything in the way of printed matter which fails to measure up to the high standards which we consider necessary in order to secure satisfactory results.

"It may mean something to you also that when we promise to have a job ready at a certain time, we keep our promise.

"Your broadside is a mighty good one, and deserves the kind of handling that will do justice to the strength of the layout and copy. We have a plan in mind which will insure this broadside receiving preferred attention from every man to whom it is mailed.

"May we tell you about this plan? Just call Main 3480 and ask for Mr. Price. He is at your service any time."

Chapter XI

Generalities Glitter but They Don't "Go-Get"

How to use specific statements without being tedious or tiresome

You will seldom sell a man anything by indulging in generalities, broad assertions or unsupported claims. The statement: "There is no other furnace made which consumes so little coal," is not convincing and will make little impression upon a man who is trying to decide what make of furnace it is best to install. But, if you say, "John Koch installed one of our furnaces in his eight-room house, at 1615 South Street, in August, 1928. In the period from October 1st to May 1st he maintained an even temperature of seventy degrees in every room—and only burned fifteen tons of soft coal," you will have gone far toward convincing this man that your furnace is a very economical one in the consumption of coal.

Don't write, "This machine will save you $500.00 in wages annually" and then stop. Tell your prospect how and why this is true. Just because you say your goods are the best in the world does not make it true,

nor will it convince your prospect. You must offer specific reasons why they are best—best, not so much for the world in general as for the particular man or woman to whom you are writing. Even if your product deserves to be known as the best, you should give reasons why it is best for the individual you are trying to sell.

Suppose that you are interested in taking a correspondence school course in advertising, and in reply to your inquiries you get letters from two schools. One reads:

"Dear Sir: We are pleased to have your inquiry of recent date concerning our correspondence course in advertising. We have the largest and best school of this character in the world. Our graduates are to be found in every state and almost every foreign country. Nowhere else in the world can there be found a corps of instructors so capable of imparting that knowledge of advertising which makes successful advertising men.

"Advertising is one of the greatest forces in business today. Millions are spent each year in advertising in the newspapers and magazines. Big salaries are paid the men who are entrusted with the handling of these vast sums for the purchase of profitable publicity. We are prepared to properly instruct you in the principles of this profession and qualify you for one of these big paying positions." And so on.

The other letter starts off:

"Dear Sir: So far as we are able to judge from your letter of August 1st, you possess at least some of

the qualifications essential to a successful career as an advertising man. If you will fill out and return the enclosed blank, we will go over it carefully and advise whether we consider it worth your while to enroll as a student of our advertising course.

"Our school was established in 1899. In that year we enrolled thirty-two students. This year we have 615 men and women studying our courses. Some of the men now prominent in the advertising business who are graduates of our school of advertising are (list of individuals and connections). In the enclosed booklet you will find many interesting facts concerning our school, a complete outline of our advertising course, and brief biographies of our instructors.

"It is estimated that in 1928 $——— was invested in advertising space by the business firms of America. The salaries of advertising men range from $50.00 a week on up. If you have the necessary qualifications, we are prepared to give you the opportunity of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the theory and practice of advertising. Whether you become a $50.00 a week advertising man or a $15,000.00 a year one will depend upon what you put into the course." And so on.

Which letter would impress you the more favorably?

Being "specific" does not mean taking up most of your letter with the specifications applying to your product. The engineer, the architect, or the factory superintendent, men thoroughly familiar with products of the class to which yours belong, may be sold through the detailing of tensile strength, melting point, specific gravity, chemical analysis, number and

character of parts and the like, but the majority of buyers pay very little attention to—in fact will not read—dry-as-dust specifications.

Your prospects care but little about what materials you use, just so they are satisfied of their good quality; nor how you make your product, just so they are satisfied that it is well made.

The prospective buyer does not want specifications, but he does want specific information. For instance, he doesn't care about the weight of a certain product, as a measure of the pull of gravity, but he *is* interested in why such a weight makes this product especially well suited to his requirements. He doesn't care to have you go into details with regard to how a certain number of wheels and rods, arranged in a certain way, when set in motion by a certain force and handled in a certain fashion, will give a certain result. He *is* interested in knowing how this result, however attained, will add to his happiness or welfare.

It is possible to be specific without giving specifications. In order to convince prospective buyers of the indestructible character of your watch, you can do so much more effectively by stating that this watch was dropped from a building of a certain height, in a certain place at a certain time without serious damage—offering photographs and possibly affidavits to that effect—than by going into the technical details of manufacture. In endeavoring to convince a man of the extraordinary strength of your brand of overalls, you can do it most effectively by telling how two

strong men, each holding a leg, pulled with all their might in opposite directions, without being able to tear them or rip them apart.

How many men buy automobiles because they approve of the complete specifications, as compared with those who buy because of the reputation a certain car has acquired; because certain other people own one of this particular make; because they admire lines and finish? Aren't most men sold because they find they can ride more comfortably in some certain make; because they find it easy to operate and economical in fuel consumption—because they have been convinced that a certain car will give them the greatest number of those things to which they attach the most importance?

The trouble with generalities is that they are not convincing. "This is the finest automobile in the world!" Who says so? Why is it? What do you mean by "finest?" Does "finest" mean the best car for me? Again, a generality is a statement which applies with equal force to any other similar product. How can you expect to sell a man an article by saying about it practically the same thing which other manufacturers are saying about their articles? When you give specific information about your product, you are giving logical reasons why it is to be preferred above other similar products.

If you want to induce a man to buy your goods instead of those of your competitors, give him specific reasons why your goods are preferable—and this can

be done without "knocking." It's fine to be enthusiastic about your product. If you don't believe in it yourself, you can't sell the other fellow on its merits. But don't sing a solo. Let the present users join in the chorus, too. Use testimonials.

Testimonials are out of favor with a good many business men at this time, because of the well-known fact that many of the testimonials used in present-day advertising are purchased outright. But there is nothing more effective than an honest expression of opinion concerning some product from a man who is qualified through experience to know whereof he speaks.

There is no better advertising than the recommendation of satisfied customers. If you can secure testimonials which give evidence of having been proffered without the hope of gain, and show on their face that the writer is a user of the product about which he writes, use them freely and often. Remember that what *you* say will always be considered as more or less prejudiced. It is what the other fellow says that builds *believability*.

Chapter XII

Handling the Angry Correspondent

writing a "soft answer" without "giving ground"

When you get a letter in the morning's mail which smites you on the cheek with stinging invective, it is not necessary that you should "turn to him the other also." But it should never be forgotten that "The discretion of man deferreth his anger and it is his glory to pass over transgressions."

Perhaps you have, at some time, suggested to a friend whose feelings have been injured by unjust or unkind words, "Just consider the source and go ahead." It is of very great importance that you always consider the source of the unkind, unjust, unfair and angry letters you receive. They are written by CUSTOMERS, men who have given the firm profitable business in the past and who will probably be the source of considerable profitable business in the future, if you will just remember that "a soft answer turneth away wrath."

Whenever we receive a blow the immediate impulse is to give one in return—and just a little harder; to return angry words with angrier ones; to

endeavor to hurt those who hurt us. When we get an angry letter our own passions are generally aroused and we think: "Why the old fool! I surely will tell him a few things," or "There's not a word of truth in that and the sooner he learns he can't put anything over on us the better," or "I'll show that dumb bell he can't write to me like that."

Which is only natural and would be all right, if the only thing to be considered was our injured feelings; but it won't put any money into our pockets, nor those of the firm, to win an argument and lose a customer. No matter what your real opinion may be of the man who writes you in a mean, ugly way, be sure to reply in such a manner as to make him think you regard him as a gentleman and a scholar.

There must be something concerning which there exists mutual agreement. Talk about this particular thing in order that your correspondent may be convinced that you CAN be right occasionally. A remark or two of a complimentary nature will help in reaching an agreement, although you should not descend to flattery of too evident a nature, sometimes referred to as "soft soaping." State your side of the question at issue in a way to avoid argument. Make the customer understand that you have no intention of considering your interests to the exclusion of his. Write in a way that will evidence a desire to be of service to him in any way possible. Do not intimate that there is any question in your mind as to the continuance of business relations between you.

Angry correspondents fall into several classifications:

1. The man who is, to some extent, justified in his anger, because you, or some other correspondent, allowed something of an offensive nature to creep into a letter addressed to him; or, because of trouble he has experienced on account of defects in goods bought from you; or, because of some failure on your part to give him satisfactory service.

In such cases it is the best policy to frankly admit the error or fault, without groveling in the dirt at the customer's feet or weeping down the back of his neck. The man who was mad enough at the time of writing you to bite a nail in two, will have had time to cool off quite a bit before your reply reaches him, and he will be inclined to accept an adjustment offered in a frank and friendly way. Never indulge in excuses, alibis or long-winded explanations.

It is a mistake to endeavor to avoid paying the penalty, when a customer has suffered loss through the fault of some member of your organization, by writing, "Willie Smith, the man responsible for this error, has been discharged." The injured customer is not interested in who is at fault, nor in having any individual lose his job, but in securing redress. The statement that Willie Smith has been "fired"—even if this statement be accepted as a fact—is not likely to cause an angry customer to forego any of his just claims.

2. The man who becomes angry without just or

sufficient reason, or because of some misunderstanding on his part with regard to the products, terms or policies of the firm.

The man who flares up suddenly over some small matter, and immediately writes you an insulting letter, is likely to forget in the next day or so that he was even peeved. The best way to handle letters of this kind is not to answer them at all. In a few days write this impulsive chap a pleasant letter, ignoring his anger, and give him the information which will set things right.

When you read a letter which reproaches and reviles you for something which is as much, or more, the writer's fault than yours, it is difficult to keep cool, but wait until you are perfectly calm, then study the matter over and see if the trouble has not arisen on account of some misunderstanding on the part of the writer. Show him where he is wrong, but do it in a very courteous and diplomatic way. Don't be brief and concise. Take the time and space to fully cover the matter at issue.

3. The man who is trying to "put something over" and writes an angry letter in an effort to bluff you into letting him "get by" with it.

The man who tries this game hardly deserves courteous treatment, but there is always a chance that he may think he is right. Anyway, the best way to handle such a man is to make him feel that you do not consider him of sufficient importance to become angry at anything he may write. Call his bluff, but

do it in a way that will enable him to retain his self-respect. Even bluffers buy goods.

Let us consider the case of an angry correspondent, who has considerable justification for anger because of an unfortunate experience with a product of yours, but who has arrived at an erroneous and unfair conclusion. This man takes the position that he can not possibly be at fault in any way and that all of your customers must have had experiences similar to his. He writes:

"Upon receipt of your shipping instructions, we will return to you the gasoline engine which you shipped on our order No. 23 of May 7th.

"We say 'engine' because that is what you call it, but we have another name for this bunch of junk. Although we followed your instruction book carefully we worked with this contraption of yours for half a day without being able to get it started. You can perhaps imagine how we felt, after having sold our customer this engine with repetition of your lies about how exceedingly simple and easy to handle all Sansone engines are.

"We want this so-called engine taken off our hands at the earliest moment possible and you'll never get another order from us. We hope to have a chance of telling a lot of people about our experience with your firm."

But the man who understands human nature—and engines—and how anger causes a customer to see things through distorted glasses and to say things he

doesn't really mean, is not floored by this punch in the jaw and comes back strong for the second round:

"If I had toiled and sweat over a contrary engine for half a day, as you did, I doubt whether I should have asked for shipping instructions. Very probably I would have written 'Come and get it.'

"Your courtesy in this regard is very much appreciated. We will not only take this engine off your hands, but will pay the freight charges both ways. We are surely sorry that you got hold of this particular engine instead of one of the something like 10,000 others that are running every day and giving splendid satisfaction to their owners. There are letters from a lot of these satisfied owners in the enclosed booklet.

"Don't you feel that you would get considerable satisfaction out of mastering this balky engine and making it run? Of course, you followed the instructions with regard to the starting of a Sansone engine, but you know how machinery is. Sometimes a very small thing will puzzle even an engine expert until he happens to run across the source of the trouble. Before taking the time to recrate and ship this engine, will you read over the enclosed sheet and try out the suggestions given thereon? Our reputation is at stake, so we will gladly pay you for your time.

"You say that you were embarrassed when you could not make this engine run, because you had praised Sansone engines so highly to your customer. Why not show him that you knew exactly what you were talking about? If you are still unable to start this engine after applying the suggestions given on our 'trouble sheet,' return it and we will ship you one in its place we know positively will perform in a satisfactory way. Turn this engine over to your cus-

tomer and let him use it free of charge until he is convinced that every word you told him about Sansone engines is true.

"If we can't demonstrate to you that Sansone engines ARE exceedingly simple in construction, easy to start and easy to handle, we surely won't expect to get any of your business, and we deserve anything you may care to say about us.

"If we do prove it, you can go ahead and build up a profitable engine business in your territory. There is no better advertising than the recommendation of a satisfied customer and you can depend upon our standing right back of every engine you buy from us. We never consider a sale closed until the customer is satisfied.

"Does this sound fair to you?"

Then there is the letter written by an angry man who is to some extent justified, inasmuch as he has found your goods unsatisfactory:

"Here's your invoice covering one case of Sugar-sweet apricots. The apricots themselves are following by freight, charges collect.

"Judging from the condition of this choice (?) fruit of yours, it must have been some Noah had left over after his trip in the ark. Five boxes of these apricots have been returned to us by good customers who blamed us because they found the contents mouldy and wormy.

"Kindly cancel our other orders you now hold. We do not care to do business with a firm which would allow goods of this character to go out to one of their customers. We trust you will tell your salesman he need not call upon us in the future."

There is no question about this correspondent having cause for complaint, but he has written in a way to make you feel, "We don't care about getting the business of a man who would write a letter like that about one defective shipment out of the hundreds of dollars worth of goods he has bought from us."

But wait! He *has* bought hundreds of dollars worth of goods from you. He may have a mean disposition but you don't want to lose his trade. Just because he is unreasonable is all the more reason why you should not reply in like vein. So you write:

"Your action in returning the case of wormy apricots, charges collect, has our hearty approval.

"Just as your five customers did exactly right when they returned the spoiled fruit to you, you did right in returning it to us. But, we hope that these customers of yours took into consideration the fact that out of all of the goods they have bought from you this is the only instance where they got anything of inferior quality.

"Frankly we don't know how our brokers happened to fall down so badly on this consignment of dried fruit. The Japanese have a proverb which says, 'Even a monkey sometimes falls out of a tree.' You may be sure that no more shipments will be made by us from this lot of apricots. Knowing the high class of trade to which you cater, we have always been very particular in filling your orders with goods of the highest quality. This policy will surely protect you from a repetition of this unfortunate occurrence.

"If you will give us the names of the five customers who returned the packages of apricots we will

take much pleasure in mailing to each of them a nice fresh package, with a letter of explanation.

"Somehow or other we just can't imagine such a thing as a discontinuance of our business relations, after so many months of satisfactory dealings, and we know Tom Milford will want to call on you just for old time's sake, even if you don't care to have him talk business.

"Anyway, don't hesitate to call on us whenever we can be of service in any way."

In writing to an angry correspondent, regardless of the degree of anger he may display, or the extent of your culpability, make him feel that you consider your interest as secondary to his. Don't try to be humorous. You may cause your correspondent to feel that you are not regarding his complaint with sufficient seriousness.

Above everything else don't write in a way to give the impression that you feel any intelligent man should be able to see your side of the question at issue. In a very interesting article in The Mailbag, Amos Shaw Place stated that one of the chief reasons "why the customer never wrote again" is the use of the phrase, "You will readily see why ....." The evident assumption that your letter to an angry correspondent will change his opinion sometimes has the effect of making him even angrier than before.

Chapter XIII

Four Ways to Lose a Customer

How some letters cure complaints and others cause them

The successful business firm takes every possible precaution to avoid giving customers cause for complaint and, yet, complaints often offer an opportunity for removing sore spots and retaining the good will of some customer who would otherwise be lost.

It is the men and women who become aggrieved for some reason, and then keep quiet about it, who comprise a large percentage of the names on your "inactive list." Many firms have secured good results by mailing a form letter to all of the men and women on their books, who seemingly have discontinued their patronage, inviting them to make complaint concerning anything in connection with goods and service which may have incurred disapproval.

Complaint letters, especially those which come unsolicited and unexpectedly, must be handled very carefully. It is not advisable to be too humble and apologetic, but it is even worse to try and place all of

the blame on the other fellow. There is a story told of a merchant who complained bitterly of the advanced age of a shipment of eggs, received from a commission house, the head of which often boasted that they never made a mistake. The letter received in reply to the complaint stated, "We are unable to see how you have any cause for complaint, since we followed your instructions. Your wire read, 'Ship six cases eggs immediately; want them bad.' "

If, after investigating a complaint, it is found that your organization is at fault do not hesitate to say so frankly. If, on the other hand, you find that the complaint is unjust, be very careful of your manner of saying so. In handling complaints it should be remembered that the complainant is very little interested in how you happened to do it; but very much interested in how and when you are going to remove the cause of complaint, make good your errors and give him what he should have in the way of redress. And, in making concessions and giving redress, be sure and do it freely and cheerfully. Don't grant a man a favor, and do it in such a way as to make him feel he was very unreasonable to ask it.

It is impossible to so conduct a business that a few customers will not have cause—or think they have cause—for complaint. A complaint letter need not mean the loss of business. There is something much worse—the letter so written that it *gives cause for complaint.* Some letters don't sell, they unsell.

Even worse than the letter which accomplishes

nothing of value is the letter which, in some way, gives offense to the man who receives it.

A letter may offend through unwarranted familiarity. Letters are sometimes written couched in such terms that resentment is aroused such as we feel when some stranger slaps us on the back and addresses us as "Old Sport." It is possible to be just as rude and unmannerly in a letter as in conversation. Other ways in which a letter may offend are:

1. Through an assumption of superiority. Example: "You understand, of course, that while we would like to handle your order as you suggest, it is not possible to conduct a big business like ours in accordance with small store practice."

2. By gratuitously giving information with which the reader is already quite familiar. Example: "Dear Doctor: We want to give you an opportunity of trying Zermol in the treatment of hyperacidity. Hyperacidity may be detected through the following symptoms:"

3. By an overdose of ginger and pep. Example: "Don't let some other merchant in your city pass you in the race for business. Now is the time to step on the gas. Get wise to the way Orsony keeps the old cash register jingling. It's got folks everywhere reaching for their pocketbooks. Put in a stock and watch our advertising sell it for you. Be one of the live wires! Get up to date! Order that Orsony now!"

4. Through an apparent effort to force a favorable decision. Example: "This is the fourth letter we

have written you and still no reply. We can not understand why you ignore this wonderful opportunity for securing the exclusive sale of our line in Greenfield. Unless we hear from you within ten days, we will extend this offer to some other dealer in your city. You are going to lose a lot of profitable business if you let this chance slip. Do not fail to let us hear from you at once."

It must be remembered that some people are thin-skinned and often take offense when none is intended. I recall one of my experiences when I was extremely anxious to secure a certain large firm as clients of the direct mail advertising concern for which I was working. I wrote a letter which I was confident would produce a very favorable impression. In this letter I used the sentences: "You know shoes; we know direct mail advertising. Together we can work out a campaign which will be productive of much profit." Greatly to my surprise an indignant reply was received, the gentleman in question asserting that he not only knew shoes, but also probably knew as much about direct mailing advertising as we did.

Here is an example of the kind of a letter that almost invariably produces a disagreeable effect upon the reader. It was written by a colonization company, endeavoring to induce realtors to act as their agents:

"Great guns Man: Why don't you answer letters?
"We cannot think it possible that you are so dis-

interested in your own cash drawer that you would ignore our invitation to cooperate with us.

"Understand, Old Man, we don't want one dime of your money, so you can throw away your scepticism right now. We even give a free trip from Chicago to the Valley and return to brokers who convince us they mean business.

"We have a clean-cut, legitimate business proposition, wherein we take prospects to the ..... Valley in private Pullmans and show them what the large majority class as the Garden Spot of North America. We are satisfied we can convince you that greater opportunities exist in this Magic Valley than in any other part of the North American continent.

"Listen, Old Scout, other brokers are making money selling land in the ..... Valley. *Do you want some of this profit or do you not?*

"We can't understand why you persist in ignoring our correspondence. Here we are sweating bullets trying to induce you to cash in on some of the business that will come out of your immediate territory and we cannot get a reply from you." And so on.

Chapter XIV

Fitting Your Message to the Reader

Five basic appeals and how you can put them to work

The man who is required to handle a large number of letters each day does not have time to make a special study of each letter, in an effort to find just the right appeal to use. However, if a sales correspondent will strive for an understanding of the motives which lie behind the actions of men and women, and make an occasional check-up on the various appeals he has used in order to see which have been most productive of results, he will eventually find himself deciding instinctively and instantly as to the best form for his reply to take.

Many letters give no clue as to the personality of the writer. There are certain emotions, however, which are common to all men and women. While some persons, of the intellectual type, believe that their actions are not influenced by their emotions—and should be written reason-why letters—even this type will unconsciously respond to an emotional ap-

peal. And many men and women are controlled almost entirely by their emotions.

There are some products of such nature that the only emotional appeal possible is to the desire for gain. However, most products allow of an appeal to several different emotions or instincts. There may be just one outstanding emotional appeal possible, but nearly always there are secondary appeals, some of which may seem of greater importance to the prospect.

The instincts which the dictator should endeavor to arouse may be classified as follows:

1. Profit: The making or saving of money.

There is one emotion or instinct which is common to all men—the desire for gain. Show a man how the product you are offering for sale will enable him to make money, or will increase his profits through decreased expense or lessened cost of operation, and you will create desire for it. Whether or not that desire can be turned into a sale depends upon your ability to convince your prospect that your product will save or make him more money, and is more desirable than some other product to which his attention has been called.

But, it will avail you nothing to convince your man that your adding machine—taking a specific example—is the best one on the market, if he has no desire for an adding machine, and does not understand how and why it will save him money—add to his profits.

2. Pride and ambition: The desire for business advancement or improvement in social standing. Emulation of others.

Pointing out an opportunity for advancement in business, or ways and means available for securing a better position, are always effective in creating desire. A man has to get pretty well along in life before he loses ambition—the hope for better things. A man has to get pretty well down in life before he loses his pride, even if the only thing he has to be proud of is his ability to "carry his liquor." In the case of a great many products, one of the most effective secondary appeals which can be used is to pride. The final urge which causes a man to buy a car, a piano, a certain piece of furniture, to go to the opera, to tour Europe, often comes through the desire to "keep up" with friends and neighbors. The desire on the part of a great many people to emulate the great, or the near-great, is the "reason why" of much periodical advertising of today featuring testimonials—some a genuine expression of appreciation of the product advertised; others merely a self-evident expression of appreciation from the signer for the money received for the use of his or her name.

3. Self Preservation: Food, drink, shelter. Protection against the dangers which threaten life and property.

Life is preserved by food, drink and shelter, but you can't sell a man milk, ham or a home by assuring him of that fact. He buys milk because he likes its

taste ; because he considers it the best drink for his children; because it is recommended by dieticians. He buys ham because of its flavor; because it has such an appetizing odor; because it looks so good. He buys a home because his friends own homes; because he wants a hearthstone around which his family can gather; because he figures a home will make or save him money; because he feels it will improve his social standing.

In writing to a man about securing protection from certain dangers which threaten him, the negative appeal is often used, and this form of advertising is considered inadvisable by many advertising experts. However, the negative appeal *has* been used very effectively and it is sometimes the only way a man can be aroused to the serious results that may come through neglecting precautionary and protective measures.

4. Family affection: A consideration of the welfare of loved ones.

A man is willing to make many sacrifices in order to give his family those things which they desire and need. Many times he buys things which he feels he could very well get along without and can not really afford, because they will add to the comfort or happiness of his wife and children.

The candidates for political office, back in the "Forties," made a practice of kissing all of the babies they encountered, in order to win the support of the proud parents. A man (or woman) who gives but

little weight to compliment and flattery as applied to himself, will always react favorably to praise of his child.

5. Attracting opposite sex: Physical appearance, personal advancement, culture, charm.

There has been some discussion as to whether the women would place so much stress upon beauty and charm in a manless world. Be that as it may, every human being craves admiration—and especially the admiration of the opposite sex. A man may buy good clothes because he considers them a business asset, but he swells with pride when he feels that he is attracting the favorable attention of the ladies.

It is indeed an exceptional woman who is indifferent to appearance and who does not long to add to her beauty and charm. The majority of women are willing to make many sacrifices in order to attain that end. There are a great number of products which could not be sold if it were not for the universal desire for the approval of the opposite sex.

Dictators can considerably increase the effectiveness of their letters by making up a list of the various kinds of appeals, which can be used in relation to the products which they are trying to sell. At first thought it sometimes seems that a certain product has no attributes which can possibly be used in appealing to the emotions, but thought should be given as to whether there is not something connected with the making of this product, the gathering of the various materials, the unusual nature of some service ren-

dered, or the part played by the product in the creation of other products, which will make it possible to arouse the imagination of prospective buyers. The most commonplace, matter-of-fact object can often be featured in human interest stories.

It is always possible for the dictator to place the writer in one of the following classifications:

Men
Women
Children

Under men a further classification can be made:

Business men
Professional men
Farmers
Mechanics
Young men

Another useful classification is:

Merchants
Consumers

As a class, women are more responsive to emotional appeal than are men. It is a mistake, however, to feel that it is advisable to exclude all reason-why copy from letters to women. They have demonstrated the possession of reasoning powers and most of them resent sentimental twaddle and the injudicious use of flattery as keenly as men. In fact, it is probably true that women are more insistent upon being told "why" than are men.

There are a number of instincts which are more strongly developed in the female of the species than

in the male. A woman is naturally more keenly interested in the home. She takes more pride in its appearance. She is always dreaming of the time when old furniture can be replaced with new. She is constantly planning for fresh paint, new colors, late designs. She is ever on the alert for ideas which will assist her in making her home more beautiful, more modern, more comfortable for her family.

Some one, in a moment of levity, remarked that home today is just a filling station. It is true that the great majority of women are finding many interests outside of the home—and they are healthier and happier because of this. Women are no longer contented to devote all of their waking hours to household duties. They are keenly interested in labor-saving devices—anything which will enable them to handle their housework more expeditiously, and so give them more time for outside interests.

Business and professional women respond to the same appeals as business and professional men, but probably give more weight to the appearance of a product, the personality of the seller, the character of service offered, and in comparative prices.

A woman will always respond to the fashion appeal. The average woman places considerably more emphasis upon personal adornment than does the average man. While she buys household equipment chiefly because of utility, the present fad for color in ranges, kitchen cabinets, cooking utensils, etc., is evidence of how a woman is influenced in all of her

purchases by appearance. Unless restrained by a realization of the necessity for economy, give a woman her choice between two articles, equal in intrinsic value, one of which is in accord with fashion's latest dictum, the other somewhat out of mode, and she will willingly pay more for the former.

Women rank high as purchasing agents for the family. The very fact that to them one of the most interesting words in the English language is "Bargain," makes them disinclined to accept any article they may be offered until they are convinced that it is not possible to obtain something better at the same price, or something equally as good for less money. When I feel myself in need of some article of clothing, the first store I go into generally gets my money—unless my wife is along. Then, we do not buy until we have visited several stores and she is fully satisfied I am getting something suited to my peculiar style of beauty, as well as the best that can be had for the money.

And how about the men?

Men pride themselves upon their logic, and letters to men should always take that fact into consideration. Men hesitate to confess their inability to fully grasp your presentation of a product—so leave no chance for misunderstanding. Most men like to study construction details and mechanical principles. They are not so much interested in "bargains"—that is, *price*—as they are in getting something which is in accord with their own ideas. They want to know not only

what a product will do but how it operates. They are always interested in the saving of time and labor. Men care less for style and fashion than women and are more slaves to custom and habit. They are interested in new inventions, new materials, new ways of doing things.

Business men are interested in practically everything which plays a part in the business world, as well as in those products which they use or sell, but professional men are somewhat narrower in their range of interests. Their attention is more difficult to secure, except where the letter concerns some phase of their work, discoveries or inventions which pertain to their respective professions, or the experience of colleagues. It has been demonstrated, however, that professional men have particularly warm hearts, down under impassive exteriors, and are especially responsive to emotional appeals, once the ice is broken.

In writing to farmers, many dictators make the mistake of considering them lacking in keenness of perception and in education. There are uneducated farmers, of course, and the dictator who writes to farmers as he would to a list of college professors, is writing over the heads of many of them. But the majority of farmers have a good practical education, and they possess more than their fair share of what used to be known as "horse sense."

Possibly it may take the average farmer a little longer to grasp the details of a subject than it does the average city man, but when he does arrive at a con-

clusion it is generally a sound and logical one. Farmers like to get letters which go into details concerning the product offered for sale. To them a short, snappy letter seems somewhat discourteous. They hardly know whether to pity or scorn the dictator who endeavors to display a knowledge of the farm and farm life, which he does not possess, like the city chap who, on seeing honey on the farm table, exclaimed "Oh, I see you keep a bee!"

Farmers like a plain, honest frank letter, which shows evidence of having been written by a man who knows what he is talking about, has an understanding of their problems, and is trying to give them every bit of information they need in making up their minds concerning the merits of a product, and as to whether they can use it to advantage.

In writing to a mechanic or tradesman, it should be remembered that he has hopes, ambitions, fears and desires, the same as business and professional men. Because his life experiences have been confined to a narrower sphere, the minute that you start writing concerning something without that sphere you lose contact with him. He is inclined to be somewhat suspicious of anything he does not understand, so the first step is to gain his confidence. Write in a plain, simple, straightforward way, and, above everything else, do not let any intimation creep into your correspondence that you feel in any way "better than he is." Unless replying to an inquiry, long letters are not advisable, and the benefits arising from the owner-

ship of your product should be stated as briefly and forcefully as possible. When you are replying to a letter of inquiry, go into full detail. The mechanic will devote all of the time he considers necessary to a study of your reply, and will consider your product from every possible angle before he decides to buy. Don't be afraid to give mechanical details.

Young men respond to the same appeals as do their elders, but they appreciate letters written in a lighter vein. Young men (and today young women) have the sporting instinct highly developed, and are inclined to be hero worshippers, in spite of their avowed iconoclasm. They are not so much interested in the cost of a product as they are in whether it is "The correct mode," "the latest idea," "a racquet like Tilden uses," etc. Young men like snappy, peppy letters and they like to feel that they are keeping just a little in advance of the masses in clothes, in mode of life, and in thought.

In writing to children, extreme simplicity is essential, although many children are as far advanced in their thinking as a fairly large percentage of adults. Write to children in "man to man" style, but be very careful not to use words or phrases which are likely to puzzle or confuse them. Children must be appealed to through their senses: "tastes so good"; "smells as sweet as a honey-suckle blossom"; "feels just like velvet."

The thought always uppermost in the mind of the merchant is "Can I sell it at a profit?" For this

reason, letters to dealers should subordinate materials, workmanship and construction details, to talk concerning how attractive the product will be to their customers, what it will do for them, just why they will buy it. While it is important that the manufacturer should strive for a friendly relationship with the dealers, the correspondent should avoid too much familiarity. Don't give a merchant the impression that you are trying to tell him how to run his business. The merchant always appreciates information which will help him increase his sales, but he wants to make use of this information when, and as, he chooses.

The consumer, or retail buyer, is also interested in profit, but in a more indirect way. He often buys because of an apparent saving in time and money, or because he sees how a certain product or service will enable him to make more money. His chief interest is in what a product will do for him; just how it will advance his interests. The dealer must have goods to sell, he is always "in the market," but the consumer may feel no need or desire for your product, and that he can get along very well without it; or he thinks he prefers to spend his money for something else. Strive to gain his friendship and good will, make him feel that it will be a pleasure to do business with you, show him how your product meets his individual and personal needs, make him see your product will be the most conducive to his comfort or happiness, convince him that it will be

worth more to him than the amount of money it takes to get it. And you have made a sale!

In going over the letters which arrive in the morning mail, the dictator should watch for anything which indicates the age, race, religion, occupation, education, intelligence and income of the various writers.

Age: It can be done! It *is* possible to sell the youth and the old man with the same appeals, but they are generally as widely apart as the poles in their thoughts, their interests and their mode of living. A letter which the young man considers clear, concise and business-like, would perhaps be regarded by his grandfather as crude, discourteous and somewhat unintelligible. It is not necessary for the dictator to stop and study out the particular form of address most suitable to a certain age. All he need do is to call to mind some individual with whom he is acquainted, of about the same age as the writer of the letter to be answered and think, "Now, how should I talk to him about this?"

Race: Different races of people have different standards of living, customs and habits. Little is ever gained by endeavoring to write a letter in dialect. You may lay yourself open to ridicule. It is often possible, however, to gain good will by commenting on some good trait or characteristic of the race to which your correspondent belongs. When you do not know the race or ancestry of your prospects do not use jokes which have as their victim a member of

some race, or ridicule some racial trait or characteristic. Your particular joke about a certain supposedly "close" nationality may be "the last straw" for the Scotchman who reads it.

Religion: If you know that the man to whom you are writing is a member of some church, you will be careful to exclude anything from your letter which might be offensive. But you never know how any correspondent may look at things. There are quite a few people in our country who do not number bootleggers among their acquaintances, and see nothing amusing in violations of the prohibition law. Some men are conscientiously opposed to card playing, horse racing, Sunday sports, etc.

Occupation: Every trade and profession has a language of its own, and the dictator who gains a correct understanding of trade terms and practices, from the reading of trade papers and magazines, has a weapon at command which will often pierce the armor of sales resistance which most men assume when they start to read a sales letter. In fitting the appeal to the prospect, it is of great help to know whether the writer of a letter is a bank president, a mechanic, a railway man, a bricklayer, a lawyer, etc.

Education and intelligence: Very few sales letters are written to illiterate people. It is probably true that you would not write in just the same way to Mrs. Lots-of-money, of the 400, as you would to Mrs. Weekly-Payday, of the 4,000,000, but they both read and understand the English language, and both will

grasp your meaning with equal facility if you write clearly and concisely, using simple words of common usage. Where the degree of intelligence and social standing of the writer of a letter is unknown, the thought to keep in mind is that if you write as simply and clearly as possible you are sure to be understood by your correspondent, no matter what his rank in life may be.

Income: When the income or financial standing of the writer of a business letter is known, the dictator is in a position to know whether this man is able to afford, or can pay for a certain product. It should be remembered that the man who can only buy a product through close economy and monthly payments, looks at the purchase of such a product from a different angle than does the man who is not required to consider the cost of anything he may desire.

Another fact, disclosed by the date line or postmark of a letter, which is of assistance to the dictator in fitting the appeal to the product, is location. A man who lives in Arizona, or some other state with a hot, dry climate, doesn't care much about the "warmth" of a product. In fact, he will enjoy as much coolness as you can get into your letter.

The farmer is but little interested in the doings of society and the city dweller cares nothing about crop conditions. The man who lives in a section of the country subject to floods, can always be interested in anything pertaining to flood control, or concerning floods. If a particularly severe winter has been ex-

perienced in a certain section, you can get the attention of the inhabitants of that section for any product which in some way offers protection from the weather.

Another thing worthy of consideration, in fitting the appeal to the prospect, is timeliness. January turns the thoughts to heating apparatus, heavy clothing, blankets, theatres, social activities, etc. May recalls refrigerators, house cleaning, screens, seeds, garden tools and outdoor sports. July, electric fans, hammocks, light literature, ice cream, cooling drinks and vacations. Each month offers conditions especially suitable for the presentation of certain products.

When there have been an unusual number of burglaries in a certain city, a resident of that city is easier to interest in protective measures. When a certain district is swept by a destructive hail storm, the farmers there are much more inclined to take out hail insurance. A big fire makes people give thought to adequate insurance.

The dictator should not only give thought to the sex, age, occupation and personality of the person to whom he is writing, but also the conditions existing in his locality at the time the letter is written.

Chapter XV

Making Your Reader Sell Himself

HOW TO DICTATE LETTERS THAT PUT THE PROSPECT'S IMAGINATION TO WORK FOR YOU

In a great many of the letters which the sales correspondent writes, he is endeavoring to sell something which the prospective buyer can only see with the aid of his imagination.

Often the product offered is one with which the prospect is unfamiliar and his conception of it will be based upon what you say about it in your letter. The more vivid and colorful your description, the more colorful and vivid the image created in the mind of your reader.

It is quite important in the making of a satisfied customer that the image created be a true reflection of the article offered for sale. It is right that you should "call a spade a spade," but you must go farther than that. Your competitors also have spades for sale. You don't want to awaken a simple, unadorned image of a spade. You want your prospect to picture

a spade conspicuously branded with red, with a handle of the right length and which just fits the hand; a spade which is the choice of men who are especially well qualified to choose; a spade which Joe Montano says is "the best danged spade made," because he has used one for three years and wouldn't trade it for any other man's new spade right now.

Write a man that he can improve his financial condition through a study of your correspondence course—and stop there—and he will feel but little urge toward spending his hard-earned money for the course. But, arouse his imagination, start him building mental images of just what it would mean to him to have more money; get him day dreaming of himself at the head of some big business, riding in a fine automobile, or touring Europe; and your course will then seem to him one of the most desirable things in life.

A noun is a name, and the name of an article may possibly set your imagination to work, but verbs and adjectives are vital to image-building. The word "horse" may cause a man to picture to himself momentarily the horses he used to drive to the plow down on the farm. Say "the horse ran" and his imagination is still further stimulated. Write, "Responding gamely to the frantic urge of his rider, the gallant son of Man O' War put his last ounce of vitality into a burst of speed, which brought him under the wire a nose ahead of Highball," and your reader's imagination will picture the "finish" in detail, so that he will

feel an impulse to join in the wild cheering which is ringing in his brain.

Humanized words appeal most strongly to the imagination and verbs and adjectives are most easily humanized. When you are describing some product see if it is not possible to use words which give it human attributes. Say the engine "hummed"; the kettle "sang"; the house "smiled in welcome"; the bed "invites rest"; the "restful" chair; the "soul-warming" red; the "laughing" water; "smiles at miles"; "eats up the road."

Read Stevenson and notice how he humanizes his nouns with adjectives. He speaks of the "inhuman desert," the "famine-guarded desert," "the melancholy desert," "the poisonous desert," "the idle desert," "the unkind desert," and "the desert's hot and dusty face."

Words alone do not create feeling, and we must cause the reader of our letters to feel the desirability of our product before we can induce him to buy it. Nothing will do more to make a man want a certain thing than seeing mental images of what this thing will do for him. Before we can cause our prospect to build mental images of this kind, similar images must be created in our own mind and the more vivid our images are, the easier it will be to transfer them to the mind of our reader through the written word. Before we can describe the feelings which will be experienced under certain conditions and circumstances, we must ourselves have had similar feelings. We must arouse

in the other person's mind, the sensations we have ourselves felt, or at least imagined.

In order to so write that we will create in the mind of your reader mental images of the pleasure and profit that will come through a trip to Europe, it is not necessary that you should yourself have made a tour of that country; but you must have read of, and listened to, the experiences of travelers to Europe until you have created mental images of such a nature as to be able to paint vivid word pictures of the trip. One must see things clearly, feel things strongly, say them sincerely in image-building words if he would have his reader see with him eye to eye.

A limited vocabulary, a few stock phrases, will never make you a great letter-writer. Would you store the treasure chest of your mind with golden words? At one time the following paragraph appeared in an article in the New York Sun:

"To arouse interest a good advertisement writer can spend many profitable hours in studying just how such successful generals as Johnson, Burke, Addison, Swift, Pope, Macaulay, Webster, Roosevelt, marshalled their verbal battalions. Each has a strategy of his own; each wins you by something individually his own. Johnson's words rumble along heavily and sound like the boom of a 42 centimeter gun. Burke's word soldiers are excellent swordsmen. Their blades are so sharp that they can cut down every enemy. Addison's army is polite and peaceful, excellent for dress parade, but not meant for battle. Swift's words

are bombs, poisoned gas, liquid fire and are hurled with accurate aim. Pope's words are daggers, they cut deep and sting hard. Macaulay is a cavalry leader. His word army rushes along on horseback and sweeps everything before it. Webster's words are volcanic, they consume the opposing forces. Roosevelt's words are dynamic. They hit every time and when the bombardment is over the enemy is no more."

The dictator of business letters can not hope to write as did these men of genius. He should not endeavor to copy or imitate them. His aim should be to acquire as large a store of words as possible and learn to use those words in creating desire in the minds of the reader for the products to be sold.

The practical, matter-of-fact business man is apt to hold the imaginative writer somewhat in contempt. To him the use of the imagination in writing means stories, novels, fairy tales. He has no conception of how large a part imagination plays in the buying and selling of goods.

Imagination has the power to construct an image of a thing, familiarity with which has been gained through past experiences. Because a seller's prospective buyers possess imagination he is able to recall to them mental images of their experiences, and so connect these images up with his products that the new and untried becomes familiar and acceptable.

We may gaze upon a limestone cliff and see naught but "rock," but the man whose past experiences have been such as to supply his brain with concepts of

quarries, and buildings will see huge limestone blocks hewn out, and before his mind's eye the cliff will grow into a magnificent building.

The sun may go down across the hills, painting the skies with sapphire and gold, while the lowing cattle wind through the flower-carpeted pasture and under the branches of the spreading cottonwoods. The practical man will think only of the milking to be done, and that it is almost time to eat again; but imagination will take this peaceful scene and transform it into a picture full of artistic appeal.

Through his imagination, the manufacturer is able to visualize those products which he has for sale as playing a part in the life of the peoples of every land. Imagination helps him in putting himself in the other man's place, it enables him to judge in what way he can best present his products to his prospective buyers—it makes it possible for him to understand how they will look at these products and how their sales resistance can best be overcome.

W. G. Bryan, a well-known newspaper man of Atlanta, Georgia, wrote a tremendously interesting article at one time on the importance of mental images in advertising. Among other things Bryan said:

"Through the power of image-building we not only make others experience our feelings more vividly, but we also unite our ambitions and desires with theirs.

"This is shown in all stages of human intelligence—from the savage, paint-bedecked warriors,

who in company with their kind, dance their war dances and visualize themselves as conquerors in battle, to the modern cultivated salesman, whose mental image of success has replaced the images of fear and failure.

"When you put yourself into the things you are writing about—when you've got the images that stand for them—when you've got the right verbs and adjectives to make the other fellow see them too—then you need to put music into your words.

"Everybody likes rhythm. And we like a little of it in words if it is served up in good form. If you say with Stevenson, 'bearded men and bitter women,' you have said something that will stick in the mind longer than if you say 'sour women.' And the reason it sticks is not because of the imagery alone. It is due, as well, to the rhythm, the music of the language.

"It is not deeds or acts that last—it is the image of those deeds and acts kept alive and fresh in the memory through written words.

"Hubbard hit this fact in some of his writings when he said, 'Horatio still stands at the bridge, because a poet placed him there.'

" 'Virginius lives in heroic mold, not for what he said or did, but for the words put into his mouth by a man who pushed what you call a virile pen and wrote such an ad for Virginius as he could never have written for himself.'

" 'Across the waste of waters the enemy calls upon Paul Jones to surrender, and the voice of Paul Jones

echoes back, "We have not yet begun to fight." And the sound of the fearless voice has given to countless thousands the courage to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.'

"Summing the whole thing up in a simple, sound statement, we are safe in saying that advertising copy can be made a concrete, convincing commodity by simply bearing in mind the following essentials:

"First the four elements of successful salesmanship: Attract attention, arouse interest, create desire, and move to action.

"Then the human instincts which are strongest: Parent, food, clothing, proprietary, hunting, constructive, social and physical.

"And, finally, these doctrines of English:

"Humanize. Put yourself into whatever you are working on. Project yourself into it. Make it live a part of your life.

"Get the images for whatever you want to work with. They will come, as a rule, if you do the first thing. Combine these images in a way that will represent a complete picture of what you are aiming at.

"Then make your language into rythmical form, so it will stick in the other fellow's ear, and get your main ideas into your verbs and adjectives.

"Verbs and adjectives are the business parts of speech. An adjective adds quality to a thing, and a verb tells you what a thing does.

"Humanize them! Brighten and intensify your

images. And success as an advertising writer cannot help but be yours.

"Generally speaking, as you put the human element into your verbs and adjectives, you increase their effectiveness."

While all of the foregoing applies more forcibly to the writer of advertising copy, and to form letters where much time can be devoted to selecting the right words and the construction of sentences, it will pay the dictator well to make a study of words and their use, and to give full weight to the importance of appealing to the imagination.

Don't strive too hard for something "original," "clever" or "striking." Keep in mind constantly that you are trying to "sell" your reader something—or rather induce him to buy it—rather than to entertain or instruct him. There is some danger that the dictator, failing to uncover anything which seems of interest to him in connection with the product he has to sell, will write about most anything which seems to him at the moment "interesting" and drag his product in by the heels at the very last of his letter.

In a very commonsensical article in THE MAILBAG some time ago, Jerome P. Fleishman said: "When you want a raincoat, will you read through a history of the origin of the pyramids in order to find out that the Sphinx doesn't wear one because rain can't harm that worthy, but that you should wear one for a diametrically opposite reason?

"Many advertisers when it comes right down to

the preparation of copy get mental stage fright—they lose sight of the fact that their composite audience is made up of individual units—that the presentation that appeals strongly to the average unit is more than likely to appeal strongly to the aggregation of units.

"And so they shoot over the heads of the individual units.

"They become grandiloquent.

"They argue.

"They plead.

"They affirm.

"They reiterate.

"They claim every good quality in sight——

"Losing sight of the fact that John Jones down there in the first row, and Sam Smith, half way back in the orchestra, and Bill Brown, away up in the gallery, don't quite 'get' all of that grandiloquence, and after a little while, are pretty certain to reckon it a bum show and let it go at that."

Create mental images in the minds of your prospects, but remember that a man can only construct his mental images from the material which has come to him through the gateways of his senses. If you write of something which lies outside the circle of your prospect's life experience, he will not "get" you. The result is about as intelligible as though a lecturer should address an audience of average Americans in ancient Hebrew.

Decide how you can best appeal to the instincts and arouse the emotions of your prospects; be sure

that you are talking in a language they will understand; seek to express your meaning in as few words as possible, say enough to arouse the imagination of your readers and then allow them to complete the picture after their own ideas.

Mark Twain summed it all up well, when he said: "An author shall say what he is proposing to say, not merely come near it; use the right word, not its second cousin; eschew surplusage, not omit necessary details; avoid slovenliness of form; use good grammar; and employ a simple and straightforward style."

Chapter XVI

Collecting Money Without Losing Customers

TOO OFTEN IT MAY BE SAID, "THE OPERATION WAS SUCCESSFUL BUT THE PATIENT DIED"

While form letters are very useful in the collection of past due accounts, and it is impossible to dictate letters to the hundreds of debtors a firm carries upon its books, there are many cases in which a dictated letter becomes necessary in order to meet certain unusual conditions. Where form letters are used by a credit or collection correspondent, frequent changes must be made in the forms, because after a customer, who is habitually slow in his payments, has received the same letter two or three times he loses interest—if he ever had any.

The collection methods of some men are reminded of the bromide about the surgeons, "The operation was successful, but the patient died." The correspondent who is successful in collecting an account, but loses a customer in doing so, will often lose business for his employer of considerably greater value

than the money he collects. Poor credit risks are plentiful, but there is only a small percentage of downright dishonest people in the world. There are very few men who do not prefer to pay their bills. Most of us take pleasure in settling our accounts promptly when due, if the funds are available.

There is no problem involved in the collection of past due accounts, when a simple reminder or two is all that is required to bring in the money. It's the fellows—and there are a few of them—who shed reminders and requests like a duck's back sheds water, that call for patience, firmness and persistence.

The first letter, whether it be a form letter or not, should do no more than nudge the elbow of the debtor, calling his attention to his overdue account in a good-humored way. This letter might read something like this:

"A lot of our friends—and we count all of our customers as friends—have just been writing us three of the sweetest words in the English language, 'Enclosed find check.' Something to that effect from you now will make our happiness complete."

Or, if you want something more dignified:

"Did you overlook our bill this month because of its smallness? We will surely be glad of the opportunity of sending you a larger one next month. Why not use the same envelope for your check and another order?"

If the debtor is ordinarily prompt in payment, you might write:

"It is something very unusual for your check not to reach us by the fifteenth of the month. For fear that our first statement got sidetracked somewhere, here is a duplicate."

The most difficult debtor to deal with is the one who maintains complete silence and fails to make reply to the most urgent letters. You have accomplished something of value if you can induce these delinquents to give some reason for their failure to pay up. The second letter to a merchant who pays no attention to your reminder might contain a paragraph like this:

"There are a few firms on our books marked 'slow pay.' You are not included in this classification, so we do not understand why we have not received your check to cover our statement of July 1st. If the amount shown by this statement is not correct, or if there has been anything wrong with our goods or service, won't you do us a favor by telling us about it?"

The retailer might write to his debtor:

"You have been a valued customer of ours for the past two years. We want to keep your name in good standing on our books. That's why we are asking whether your failure to pay your overdue account has been caused by any fault of ours. We strive to sell

satisfaction, because that is something a man is always glad to pay for. When may we expect your check?"

When a merchant is unable to pay his bills, harsh words won't help any. He needs encouragement and assistance. There are a number of large wholesalers and manufacturers who write dealers they have reason to believe are finding difficulty in meeting their bills, offering to give them the assistance of experts in the solution of the problems which may be worrying them. Often cooperation is given the merchant in holding a sale, in order that he may get rid of "stickers" and raise the necessary cash; or he is given help in doing more effective advertising, in the display of his goods, and so on.

If a merchant does not have sufficient funds at the first of the month—and the same thing applies to the retail customer—to meet all of his bills, he will generally favor those of his creditors who have won his good will. That is why every other means should be exhausted before resorting to harsh language and threats. A man can't give you what he doesn't have, but you may be able to persuade him to make a payment on account and set some definite date when he will be able to settle in full. Here are some paragraphs along that line:

"Our business relations have been most pleasant and we believe that you have profited through dealing with us. You have already built up a good business

on our line, but our sales promotion department has some plans worked out which should assist you to considerably increase your sales this year.

"That is why we are objecting to our credit department putting you in the 'cash or C. O. D. Class.' Your account is now 60 days overdue. Will you justify our faith in you by sending your check right now for part of this overdue amount, and name a definite date when you will pay the balance? For your own best interest, we hope you can make it soon."

It is the job of the collection correspondent to get the money, but in a majority of cases it is possible to do this, and still retain the good will of the customer. If you can make a man believe that you are genuinely interested in his welfare, he will generally make an extra effort to settle his account with you.

A man who has allowed his account at the grocery store to get considerably behind could hardly take offense at the letter below, yet it places him in a position where he must make some arrangement for payment, or acknowledge that he doesn't want to play fair with his creditor:

"Dear Mr. Brown:

"Jimmie Green, the lad we send out with a bunch of statements every month, in order that our customers may know just how they stand on our books, came back from his trip Monday all worked up. He said that you told him to get to thunder out of your place, that you would pay us when you got good and ready—if you ever did.

"Jimmie is young and excitable and he had his mind all made up that you are going to try and 'beat us' out of our money. We know better. I have been in business long enough to learn that about ninety-nine out of every hundred men pay their honest debts and I know you are not one of the 'black sheep.'

"The fact is we have found that the hardest folks to get our money from are those who have so much money they feel a grocery bill is entirely too trifling a matter to be worthy of their attention. We would rather do business with the men who are dependent upon their weekly pay envelope. They usually have several places to put every dollar, but when they tell you that they will do something *they do it.* They pay their honest debts, not because they are forced to do so, but because they want to be in a position to look every man in the eye and tell him to 'Go to.' Except in emergencies—when they can't help themselves—they ask favors from no one.

"We have tried to give you full value for every dollar you spent with us and to treat you right in every way. We feel that we have succeeded, and that's why we are so confident you want to be fair with us.

"If you need a little extra time on that bill of yours, you can have it. We are willing to do what we can to help you make both ends meet, if you will do what you can to help us do the same thing. Most grocers need every cent they can rake and scrape together to keep things going and make a living for their families.

"Let's get together. Come in the first time you have a chance and let's work out the best way of handling this bill for both of us. We haven't the slightest doubt about your paying our bill, but it would surely be a big help to us if you would say when.

"Yours for Fair Dealing,"

Here is the type of letter that a manufacturer might write to the merchant, who seems to be in need of some help in meeting his bills:

"So far as we can see, there is no reason why you should not do a fine business this year, and close the season with a goodly amount on the right side of your ledger. Conditions are reported as being above the average in your territory, you have a splendid location and you are a wizard at displaying your stock.

"It is only natural that we should be interested in seeing you increase your volume of sales, because we have given you the exclusive sale of our line in your city. Our prosperity is dependent upon the prosperity of our dealers. Realizing this we have worked out some 'dealer help' ideas, which it is possible you can use to advantage."

(Here outline the sales promotion plans and follow with these paragraphs:)

"Don't let the fact that your account is long overdue with us keep you from taking advantage of this proffered cooperation. If you can't settle your account in full at this time, the next best thing is for you to pay us as much as you possibly can, and give us an idea as to when you will be able to make another payment.

"We hope to be able to work with you in a way that will place you in a position to take advantage of the cash discounts on all the goods you buy."

One of the most difficult situations the credit or collection correspondent is called upon to handle is where a good customer deducts the two per cent discount offered for cash in ten days, in making remit-

tance some time after the expiration of this discount period. Here is a letter which might be used in such cases:

"Probably it was just an oversight, but . . .

"During 1928 our customers took advantage of the special two per cent discount for cash in ten days on $27,300.00 worth of our goods. That's a total discount of $4,546.00, which amount was added to their profits.

"It's good business on the part of our customers to take advantage of this discount. It is good business on our part to give it, because it brings in the cash when we need it. If our customers who now pay their bills inside of the ten-day limit waited thirty days instead, we would be forced to borrow money to carry on.

"How would it affect *your* profits if something should happen to tie up most of the capital that you are now using in your business, so that you would be forced to go to the bank for a loan?

"You remitted to cover our invoice of January 15th on January 30th—and you deducted the two per cent discount we offer for cash in ten days. It wouldn't make much difference if only one man took advantage of this discount, regardless of the date of payment. But if one man does it, why not a thousand? Invoice is enclosed covering the amount of discount you deducted and we ask you to do what you believe is the fair thing to do.

"You are one of our most valued customers. We want you to take advantage of this two per cent discount every month. If you are troubled by slow collections at this time, perhaps we can make some

suggestions that will help. We want to cooperate in every way possible."

This letter, of course, is of a somewhat formal nature and where personal acquaintanceship exists between the customer at fault and some member of the firm, a letter like this might be better:

"It's a small matter and we dislike to bother you with it. But we would want you to tell us if one of our employees made a like error.

"In remitting on January 30th, to cover our invoice of January 15th, some one in your accounting department deducted the two per cent discount which we offer for cash in ten days.

"We are sure you will want to issue instructions to your accounting department to always be careful to see that remittance is made on all of your bills at a time which will entitle you to the extra two per cent discount.

"How's business? From the reports of our salesmen, we judge you are going to make an even better record this year than you did last. Remember we are always ready to do anything we can to help."

If, after sending one of these letters no response is received, here is a follow-up that might be tried:

"Our business relations have always been pleasant, and we believe profitable for both of us. We surely don't want any misunderstanding to arise now.

"You waited until January 30th to pay our bill of January 15th, and deducted the two per cent which we offer for cash in ten days from date of invoice.

We wrote you about this on February 5th, but have had no reply.

"We have tried to explain to you that while we do not regard this as a particularly serious matter, it does become extremely serious when a large number of our customers do the same thing. Surely you can understand why we found it necessary to call this to your attention. Are we right in our stand? Write us frankly how you feel about our position with regard to a merchant taking the cash discount, after the discount period has expired.

"If you can convince us we are wrong, we will say nothing more about it."

If one of your customers ignores your appeals to his sense of fairness, and continues to take the two per cent discount when he is not justly entitled to it, the matter then resolves itself into a question of whether you can afford to risk the loss of his business by forcing an observance of your discount rule. In many cases, the merchant who persists in taking a discount to which he is not entitled is not the kind of customer to whom it is advisable to extend credit.

It is sometimes possible to hasten the payment of an overdue account by suggesting the possibility of injury to the credit standing of the debtor if he does not pay you. For instance:

"The R. G. Dun Mercantile Company gives you a credit rating of E-2. In order to acquire such splendid credit standing you have undoubtedly made it a practice to meet all bills promptly as they fall due. Just what interpretation do you want us to place

upon the fact that your account with us, in the amount of $273.50, is now 90 days overdue?"

Or, you might write:

"Just what value do you place upon your ability to buy from us upon our regular terms of 30 days net? Wouldn't it be a little inconvenient to have to do your buying upon cash or C. O. D. terms? Your account is now 90 days overdue, and you have failed to give us any reason for this delay. Can you afford to have an unfavorable report made to the mercantile agencies?"

Even when it becomes necessary to place an account in the hands of an attorney for collection, your letter advising the debtor of your contemplated action, should be courteous:

"For some reason unknown to us, you have failed to reply to our letters with regard to the $300.00 which you owe us, although this account is now four months overdue. It seems that you place no value upon our good will and do not care to make any effort to meet this obligation.

"Therefore, much as we regret causing you annoyance and extra expense, if remittance in full is not received by us by the first of next month, we will place this account with our attorneys with instructions to bring suit for the amount involved."

It is a mistake to endeavor to induce payment by talking about how badly you need the money. No intimation should be given in your first few letters

that there is any doubt in your mind as to the payment of the account. Be careful that you keep within the law, thus avoiding the possibility of a suit for libel. If you are not sure, consult an attorney.

Don't state in one letter that you are going to turn the account over to an attorney for collection, and then evidently forget all about it in your next letter. When you tell your debtor that, unless remittance is received by a certain date, you will resort to legal measures for collection, live up to your word.

The number of letters that it is advisable to write in the collection of overdue accounts, or the length of time that should elapse before the account is placed in the hands of an attorney or turned over to a collection agency, should be decided by experiment upon your part.

Chapter XVII

Get Yourself Believed!

FOLLOW THESE DIRECTIONS AND YOU WILL DICTATE WITH NEW-FOUND FORCE

Get yourself believed!

A letter may be written in poor English, on cheap stationery, with a 1910 model typewriter, and yet get what it goes after. Your message may violate every rule governing the writing of letters, except the one of "ringing true," and still be a successful letter.

You doubtless have come in contact with men you mentally cataloged as "smooth guys." A man may wear the best of clothes, be fluent of speech and exceedingly friendly in manner, and still fail to win your confidence, because you instinctively feel a lack of sincerity. Some letters are so polished, so well-dressed, so eloquent, so overly generous with offers of special favors, that they tend to create suspicion. The mental reaction is: "That sounds too clever. I'll have to watch my step or he'll put something over on me," or "Methinks the man doth protest too much."

After all there is nothing you can put in your

letters which will do quite so much toward winning the confidence of your readers and convincing them of the merits of your goods as will SINCERITY.

It is possible to simulate honesty, frankness, friendliness and enthusiasm, but a sincerity which is not sincere seldom deceives, especially in a letter. Unless you sincerely believe in the superiority of your products, you will find it difficult to so write about them as to convince your reader of that superiority. If you are not sincere in what you write, regarding the benefits your reader will receive from your product, you can not make your letter "ring true."

The dictator is often called upon to endeavor to sell something on which he is not himself fully sold. This is a situation which can not be avoided at times, but should not be allowed to continue any longer than is necessary. Many times a man's lack of faith in his firm or their goods is due to a lack of understanding.

What do you really know about the men at the head of the company by which you are employed? What do you know concerning the *reasons back of* certain of their policies of which you do not approve? How much do you know—first hand—concerning the goods you are to sell?

Study the goods manufactured or handled by your firm. Use these goods, try them out or watch them tried out. Find out of what materials they are made and how these materials are handled. Find out ALL of the uses of each product. Talk to the workmen who make these goods and to the people who use

them. See if a product about which you have been doubtful does not have some especially good features, which outweigh defects on which you have been concentrating your attention.

If, after doing this, you are not inspired with loyalty toward your employers and enthusiasm for the goods and service they offer—if you do not sincerely believe in the merits of the goods you are to sell—it is time to look for another job.

But do not lose sight of the fact that you will not find absolute perfection anywhere—either in men or goods.

A firm will sometimes write letters with a deliberate intent to deceive, in a small way, probably on the theory that it is all right to do evil in order that good may result.

However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to fool the gentle reader with some of the more or less harmless "tricks" that have been used in sales letters. Very few prospects will have perfect faith in the *multigraphed* letter which starts off, "You are one of the very few men to whom we are going to extend this special offer," or "The directors of our company are especially anxious to have you become an owner of a Balderdash."

Another thing, which tends to prevent a letter from "ringing true," is to send it out on the stationery of "The President," reading something like this, "Yesterday my attention was called to the fact that you have not taken advantage of our special offer."

Or, "I am writing you personally because I know you to be the type of man we are desirous of having become students of our course."

Then, there's the letter which starts off:

"This offer is only good until the 15th of April, and you will never again have the opportunity of buying a Dujigger at such an extremely low price," which is followed up along about the first of May by another letters, starting out:

"Your order for one of our Dujiggers has not yet been received. Realizing the value to us of your endorsement of a Dujigger, we are going to fill your order for one at the ridiculously low price of $..... Remember you will never again have the opportunity of buying a Dujigger at such a price."

The dictator is not going to have much luck in getting himself believed, who writes a bachelor, "We are writing you this letter, knowing that you are now planning for the education of your children;" or to a banker, "Wouldn't you like to know how you can draw 8% on your savings with perfect safety?"; or to the successful business man, "Where will you be at seventy? If you would achieve success in business you must lay the right foundation now."

It is possible to arouse distrust in the mind of the reader by promiscuous praise or fulsome flattery. Most men will swallow a little judicious flattery and smack their lips. But a man has to be very credulous if he believes in your sincerity when you ascribe to him virtues he knows he does not possess, or praise

him for being something he is not, or for doing something he did not do.

It is possible to awaken distrust in the mind of the reader of a letter by indulging in bragging, in the manner assumed by a man who endeavors to hide an inferiority complex with boast and bluster. It is hard to gain belief if you claim something for your product which he believes is not an attribute of such a product, unless you offer proof. Many wise letter-writers believe that, as a general thing, better results will be obtained by letters which are very conservative concerning the product to be sold—which understate rather than overstate its good qualities.

It is possible to awaken distrust in the mind of the reader by "knocking" competitive products. Did you ever notice that a man is seldom criticised by his equals? It is the smaller men—men who are conscious of his success and envious of it—who are constantly seeking some crevice in his armor, through which they can insert a poisoned arrow. Did you ever notice how the big dog seems serenely unconscious of the terriers frantically barking at his heels?

If the dictator devotes much space in his letter to explaining why his product is better than competitive makes, the reader is apt to wonder why, if the superiority of his product is so evident, it is necessary to take up so much space to point out this superiority.

It is possible to awaken distrust in the mind of the reader by a too-apparent eagerness to sell him something. The methods of those queer business establish-

ments, where the passerby—if he looks like a likely "victim"—is seized by the arm, dragged within, and sold something by main force, are only applicable to a very limited field.

Nobody wants to be sold anything. The very word "sold" has disagreeable connotations. High pressure salesmen do sell things—sometimes to a man who does not want nor need the thing he is sold—but high pressure sales methods can seldom be successfully used in a dictated letter.

You can't make your letter back a man up in a corner and hypnotize him to the point where he will do about as he is told. Try to apply too much pressure in a letter, and "kerchunk" into the waste basket it goes.

Strange as it may seem, telling the truth in your letter will not always get you believed by your reader. As one of my employers tells his salesmen:

"You must remember that, according to the life experiences of people, what is truth to one man is untruth to another. You must be believed to be persuasive. It is always a question just how you should state a fact in order that it may be in accordance with the life experience of the man to whom you are talking."

Just because a man will interpret a statement in the light of his own experiences is the reason why it is not considered a violation of business ethics to get a little bit away from the strict truth in the description of goods offered for sale.

Read over the advertisements in the newspapers and magazines, read sales letters, and you will see that a big majority of them make statements which are not absolutely true, or which would, at least, be extremely difficult to prove. This is not done, in the majority of cases, with any intent of deceiving prospective buyers, but in order to paint a picture which, though somewhat distorted, gives a better idea of the product than would an exact and detailed description.

But there is no question about honesty being the best policy, in the long run. Profits come chiefly from "repeat orders" in the case of most firms. If some article is sold to a prospect through misrepresentation, the chances are not very good for any "repeat orders" from that source. Where letters are written, leading up to the inspection of some product by a prospective buyer, it is advisable to be conservative in setting forth its merits. It is much better that the prospect should find the product more desirable than your letters led him to believe, rather than less so.

The sales correspondent who wants his letters to ring true—and unless they do they will not be believed—will endeavor to the best of his ability to give his readers a true understanding of the product about which he is writing. He will make the reader feel that he is genuinely desirous of serving him, because he actually does feel that way. He will be so enthusiastic about his goods that he will write in such a

way as to leave no room for doubt in the prospect's mind that he means just what he has written.

The one thing, above all others, which will make an otherwise poor letter effective is SINCERITY.

Chapter XVIII

"What's Wrong with this Letter?"

How certain messages might have been made doubly effective

Not much space in this book is devoted to the analysis and criticism of letters. One reason is that this has been a favorite method with the majority of writers of business letter books in giving instruction in the writing of better letters. We wanted to go at it in a little different way. It is also a fact that a letter which is called "good" by experts may fail to get satisfactory results, while another letter which seems to violate many of the rules of letter-writing gets what it goes after. Results are the best test of a letter, but the conditions and circumstances surrounding a letter—the character of the goods to be sold, the price, the condition of the market, etc., must always be taken into consideration.

There are many men who do not claim to be able to write superior letters, but are always ready to show the other fellow how his can be improved.

The letters criticised below are "form letters," but

they will serve to illustrate some of the points which have been brought out in preceding chapters.

Here is a stock selling letter, sent out by an automobile company, which I believe has ceased to exist:

"Dear Sir:

"What is your opinion of a group of men who began business, putting a car out under their own name with a few thousand dollars of capital—the smallest original capital investment of any organization of its kind we know of—having with this unpretentious beginning carried their business into its third successive year—and who now have future delivery contracts on hand for 22,473 cars, representing a valuation of $14,494,988.00, all of this having been accomplished without one dollar of added capital investment in the stock of their company until *the present offering?*

"If you think under these conditions they are entitled to *your consideration* and confidence, this invitation, forwarded at the request of one interested with us, will certainly have a big influence on your future prosperity.

"The future policies of the Jones Motor Vehicle Company will be administered by the men who have been responsible for its wonderful development down to this time in conjunction with a board of directors and advisory directing board, composed of a group of prominent bankers and business men.

"If you feel that such administrative officers furnish a proper guarantee of the integrity of an organization, then we feel certain that you will be very anxious to learn more of the details in connection with the wonderful business opportunity we are now able to offer you.

"The Jones '30'; an electric lighted, electric started, fully equipped motor car; one of unexcelled beauty; of greater power; of greater luxury than the market otherwise affords within its class, is the wonderfully popular product that has made this almost unbelievable development possible.

"Our business platform has been—An unexcelled product—A popular price-mark—Honest service and an economical business administration:—If this, our policy, had not succeeded we could not now be telling you this story of expansion.

"What would you do under such circumstances? Would you accept added capital and build a bigger business, employ more people and divide the prosperity made possible through this development with your shareholders and helpers; or would you turn down the big new business which is continually accruing to us? We believe you would do as we are now doing, increase your capital and expand.

"This leads us to the second part of our letter: Our subscribers to stock now number well over 6,000, and we are every day adding more and more members to this already very large list. Our stockholders are scattered over a great range of territory from Maine to California.

"We believe that by interesting thousands to whom we are extending an invitation to join us, as we now invite you to become a partner with us, and boosting with a justified admiration in their own product—The Jones '30'—will of itself sell every car we could build for years to come.

"We believe as a rule that ten small shareholders will sell many more cars than one large shareholder. That is why we have made our shares $10 (par value)

each. You are very cordially invited to join us—as it is co-operation and co-partnership that we first of all are working for. That is why we reserve the right to reject individual application for more than 500 shares and why terms will be arranged if you prefer to pay on installments.

"The company manufacturing a motor car nearest like the Jones '30' produced 30,000 cars in 1915,—60,000 cars in 1916 and announce a production of 125,000 cars in 1917,—a production increase of 100% yearly. Their earnings ending July 31, 1916, were $5,424,600.

"We estimate profits of $97 per car in production runs of 25,000 cars, which would earn shareholders $2,425,000 in dividends.

"We have published a very interesting illustrated booklet telling in detail the history of our business; this book shows why 'NO OTHER INDUSTRY ON EARTH HAS BEEN SO PROLIFIC IN ITS BIRTH OF MILLIONAIRES OR IN THE RAPID CREATION OF WEALTH AS THE MOTOR CAR INDUSTRY.' Its title is 'THE MODERN MOTOR MIRACLE,' it reads like a romance but it is true history of Jones Motors. If you are interested in our investment offer,—we will be pleased to send you a copy, together with *credentials and testimonial letters*—if you will promptly fill in and mail the enclosed post card.

"Thanking you for your attention and trusting to be of further service to you, we beg to remain

"Yours very truly,
JONES MOTOR VEHICLE COMPANY
Geo. L. Jones
President."

Let's take this letter paragraph by paragraph:

Paragraph one is too long. It discourages, rather than invites attention. There are ninety-three words in this paragraph, and all in one sentence. How much better to have started off something like this: "Only three years in business and future delivery contracts on hand for 22,473 cars!" This first paragraph also makes the mistake of telling the object of the letter. Further reading by the man who is not interested in stock offerings is discouraged right at the start.

Paragraph two: Why be so secretive about the name of the man at whose request the invitation to participate in the future earnings of the company was sent? If there are well known men interested in the company, then their names will do more than anything else to create confidence.

Paragraph three: Who are the men who have been responsible for this wonderful development? Who are these prominent bankers and business men? Doesn't the failure to give their names make the reader wonder whether they are actually *prominent* bankers and business men?

Paragraph four: How can a man feel that "such administrative officers furnish a proper guarantee of the integrity of an organization," when he doesn't know who the administrative officers are? This paragraph serves no good purpose and could very well be omitted.

Paragraph five: The description of the car could

very well have been made more specific. Saying that it is of unexcelled beauty, etc., doesn't convince a man that it is the kind of car he wants to back with his money. Right here would be a good place to give the reasons why the Jones Motor Vehicle has become so popular and why an increased demand is anticipated, instead of the sixth paragraph, which indulges in generalities.

Paragraph seven: This paragraph is poorly worded and constructed and should come near the close of the letter.

Paragraphs eight, nine and ten: The inference from these paragraphs is that the Jones Motor Vehicle Company needs more money and are asking the reader to buy stock because this will enable them to sell more cars. The prospect is not interested in what he can do for the Jones Motor Vehicle Company, but in what this company can do for him. A much stronger inducement for investment would be facts with regard to how the 6,000 subscribers have profited in the past.

The remaining paragraphs of the letter are fairly good, but the ending is exceedingly weak. How much better to have written: "If you want to become connected with the most rapidly expanding industry in the United States today—if you want to share in the profits which are sure to come to the men who put their money into this business while it is in its infancy and grow up with it—fill in and mail the enclosed

card. Failure to act now may lose you one of the greatest financial opportunities of your life."

The writer of this letter evidently had no definite plan of construction in mind when he started to write. He did not understand the importance of leading the reader along in a logical, connected way, gradually leading up to his climax. He used generalities, instead of specific statements in several of his paragraphs. He looked at the proposition from his own standpoint, rather than from that of his prospective purchasers.

The next letter to which we turn our attention is in answer to one requesting information concerning a picture projector. It illustrates how a letter may be so "brief" as to fail to take even the first step toward the making of a sale—getting attention—much less leading the prospective purchaser through interest and desire to action:

"Gentlemen:

"Referring to your letter of February 2nd, we enclose herewith one of our booklets. The prices of these machines will be on the A 11 $300 and on the A 1 $275.

"The A 11 has a screen self-contained in its own case making a single carrying unit. The A 1 has two separate packages, the screen being carried in a leather portifolio.

"Trusting we may be of further service to you, we remain."

A booklet was enclosed and a long letter is not

necessary when it is accompanied by an explanatory booklet. But this booklet contained nothing which would cause the inquirer to build mental images of the machine in use in HIS business.

The entire letter gives the impression that the writer was thinking, "We have this machine all right and you can get one if you have the price. Suit yourself about it." The end is very weak with no inducement whatever offered for action.

Here is a letter, written by a "beginner in the business." What he is trying to do is to sell the salesmen of his firm on the help it is possible to derive from advertising and sales promotion work, if they will give the proper cooperation:

"Mr. John Smith,
Hotel Soandso,
Detroit, Mich.
"My dear Smith:

"You may have heard this one before, but I just heard it today, and thought I would pass it on to you. Here it is:

"A traveling man was very low in the hospital, and the attendants asked him if he wished to leave any word to relatives or loved ones before he passed on to the Great Beyond. He replied as follows:

"There's Gracie in Schenectady,
And Flo in Gloversville;
Millie down in Albany,
Kate in Mechanicville.
There's Susie up in Troy,
Maudie in Whitehall,

The young man sighed
It's time I died,
I've sworn I loved them all.

"How's that? Isn't that a corker?

"Now Smith, my object in writing to you is this: I want to set you right regarding the advertising department of our house. I know that you are just a little averse to this department; for why, I really don't know. Advertising is the advance agent of the salesman. It goes along ahead of the salesman and sort of paves the way, so to speak. In other words, it makes it easier for the salesman.

"This being the case, don't you think that you should be pulling with the advertising department, instead of against it?

"You know Smith, we are all working for the same cause, namely: to produce results for our house; and just think of the greater results we could produce if we were working in harmony.

"This department is here to help you, and if you will just tell me about the people that you run up against and how they feel toward our goods, I will be tickled to pieces to study their wants, and appeal to them accordingly. And don't you see, by doing this it is going to mean more for you and our house? Why sure you do, and you know you do, Smith.

"Now just make a note to come in and see me the next time that you are here, and we will get together and have a good old heart-to-heart talk.

"Yours for more business."

This letter is "all wrong." The very salutation itself is calculated to arouse antagonism. I can imagine this salesman thinking, "Mister Smith to

you, young fellow." The same mistake is made down in the body of the letter, where the paragraph starts with "Now, Smith." This writer made the mistake of thinking that, in order to make his letter personal, he must indulge in familiarity.

About half the letter is taken up with an anecdote which has absolutely nothing to do with the real objective of the letter. It is sufficiently difficult to get a salesman to devote any of his few leisure moments to reading letters of any kind, without trying to make him wade through a "chestnut." He very likely knows dozens of better jokes.

How much simpler and better to get attention by an opening like this: "How would you like to double your commissions this year?"

How is an old, experienced salesman going to feel about a "cub" correspondent stating that he is going to "set him right?" Why put into this man's mind the thought that he is "averse to this department?"

In the next to last paragraph, the writer gives Smith to understand that he is unable to properly size up his prospects and make the right appeal to them. Another slap in the face. How much better it would have been to win the good will of this salesman by a little judicious flattery. How much better to make him feel that he is the one man above all others in a position to size up his customers and prospective customers, and tell the sales promotion department about what, and how, it can write them most effectively.

The basic fault of this letter is that it is written

entirely from the standpoint of the sales promotion man. It fails to give Smith any idea as to how the sales promotion department is going to help him increase his sales. It says between the lines, "This is the way we are going to do it, and you had better hop on the wagon."

Chapter XIX

Long Letters—or Short Ones?

When to dictate long letters—and when to cut to the core

On every side you hear the adjuration, "Make your letters brief." This is good advice, if you do not consider briefness synonymous with shortness. In a general way, letters to busy business men should be just as short as is possible to cover the ground; letters to farmers and people of more leisure may be made more explanatory. Certainly you do not want to be so brief that your correspondent becomes offended, because of what seems to him unnecessary curtness; nor is anything gained by arbitrarily confining your letter to a page or a half page, when it is impossible to say all that should be said in such space, and two or three additional letters become necessary.

The only safe plan is to say everything that needs to be said, whether it takes one page or three, and then stop. Do not take up any space in talking of matters which have no connection with the subject matter of your letter. Use the fewest possible words

to express your meaning, but be sure that you say enough to make your meaning clear.

In the use of advertising space, sometimes costing thousands of dollars, it is very essential that every superfluous word be eliminated. But good advertisements, as a rule, would not make good letters. The chief virtue of a letter is that it can be made personal and individual in tone, even when the same letter is to go to thousands of prospects.

Some letters leave the reader cold, because all human interest has been squeezed out in order to make the letter short. Telegrams have been used to get orders for millions of dollars worth of goods. But telegraphic brevity will not make friends for the house; it won't sell a man something he didn't know he wanted or needed; nor win a dealer over from a competing line.

Show a man where he will benefit largely from buying certain goods at a certain time, and he will buy, regardless of his personal feelings, but whenever it is possible to do so without loss, he will buy from the man who has won his good will.

About the only consideration it is necessary to give to the length of a letter is to eliminate unnecessary words. It is not practicable to arbitrarily confine letters on all subjects to a single typewritten page, and say all that should be said. It takes a considerably longer letter to sell an automobile than it does to sell a fountain pen. The briefer a command the more forceful it is, but in order to persuade you

must use a sufficient number of words to show a man why it is to his interest to do as you suggest.

When you are writing to secure an inquiry, to be followed up later, a short letter will suffice, because your prospect is not asked to give up any money, and generally the only effort required on his part is to sign a card and drop it in the mail. It's different when you are seeking to make a sale. Then, you are asking your man to give up some of his hard-earned cash, and to decide between the purchase of your product and something else which he desires. Sales resistance can not be overcome without a complete sales story.

It is all right to leave something to the imagination of the reader. It will not do to be prolix or tiresome. But it is necessary to get attention, arouse interest, create desire and secure action. Don't sacrifice any of these essential ingredients of a successful letter to "briefness."

One of Mark Twain's stories concerned his going to church one Sunday morning, where he found the preacher so eloquent that he decided to drop all of the money he had with him in the collection basket. A few minutes later he decided to *borrow* some money to drop in; but the preacher went on, and on, and on, until Mark not only didn't put anything in the basket, but took out a quarter instead!

Some salesmen talk too much and some correspondents write too much. Get the attention of your prospect as quickly as possible and then get right into

the meat of your letter. Don't introduce extraneous matter into your letters and so draw the attention of your readers from the main issues. Go, in as straight a line as possible, from attention, through desire, to action. You do not want your reader to think how clever your letter is, nor how beautifully written, but rather, "Why that is just what I want."

Where it is necessary to create desire, it is not advisable to use the brevity suitable to a telegram, but it is surprising how many words can be eliminated from a letter when you read it over. Long, involved sentences do not invite reading and they are hard to understand. The average man or woman will not wade through a wilderness of words, in order to discover what may be concealed within.

The more skilful we become in the use of words, the fewer we require in expressing our thoughts. Practice constantly on the elimination of unnecessary words and meaningless phrases. Use short sentences and paragraph often.

Men who are experienced in the writing of letters will tell you that it is not nearly so easy as it sounds to so write that you will convey to the reader just what you wish and intend to convey. Often I have been surprised to have some one read a letter, which seemed to me entirely clear and understandable, and find therein a meaning which I did not have in mind at all.

While a letter, composed entirely of short, snappy sentences will sometimes produce a disagreeable sen-

sation in the mind of the reader, it is vitally important not to use long, involved sentences, capable of several different interpretations.

There are many instances in which it is advisable to write a long letter, in order to properly present the matter in hand to the prospective purchaser. A long letter, however, is handicapped because it looks "hard to read." There is always a tendency on the part of the reader to skip from point to point in the endeavor to get the gist of the message without a complete perusal.

For this reason, it is advisable to "lighten up" a long letter as much as possible through variations in the typographical style and changes in the arrangement of the copy. Here are some of the ways in which this may be done:

1. Through the use of subheads, scattered here and there through the letter. Subheads serve to catch the eye of the reader and should be so worded as to arouse interest in the paragraph which follows.

2. By using all "caps" for certain sentences and paragraphs and by underscoring.

3. By writing some of the paragraphs in a narrower measure than used for the body of the letter.

4. By writing certain sentences or paragraphs with a different color of ribbon than that used for the rest of the letter.

5. By alternating long paragraphs with short ones.

6. A long letter may be made more readable by the use of testimonials, written in a narrower measure.

7. Attention can sometimes be regained through the use of an anecdote. When the public speaker notices some of his audience beginning to nod, he often uses a story to reawaken interest. Care should be taken when an anecdote is used in a letter to see that it is applicable to the subject which is under discussion. It should "tie up" with the copy which precedes and follows it.

Chapter XX

Look to the "Looks" of Your Letters

YOUR LETTERS ARE JUDGED BY THEIR APPEARANCE AND YOU ARE JUDGED BY YOUR LETTERS

In endeavoring to console me for my inability to dress up to the standard set by my associates, Grandmother used to say, "Never mind, Jack, if you act pretty no one will notice your clothes." The trouble with Grandmother's theory is that if your exterior is not "pretty," you will seldom have an opportunity of exhibiting the pleasingness of your interior furnishings.

Should the representative of a business house be so foolish as to start out with unshaven face, wrinkled clothes, soiled tie and muddy shoes, he would find it difficult to get by the office boy, and almost impossible to get a favorable hearing from "the boss." And such a salesman leaves behind him a decidedly unfavorable impression of the firm which he is representing.

One of the most important considerations in selecting a salesman is personal appearance. A man must be fairly pleasing in personality, cleanly in

habits and neat in dress—avoiding the sensational and the flashy—in order to worthily represent the house for which he travels.

Any letter which goes out over the signature of your firm is regarded as a representative of yours, the same as one of your salesmen. Regardless of the contents, a poorly-paragraphed, slovenly-written letter, full of errors and erasures, makes a bad impression upon the recipient. A letter dictated with the greatest care will often fail to accomplish its purpose, because an unfavorable first impression is given by poor stationery, or careless transcription by the stenographer. And the stenographer who is so deficient in pride, so lacking in loyalty to the firm, as to be indifferent and careless in the transcription of her notes, fails to earn even the small salary which is the usual recompense of the inefficient worker.

The small additional cost of attractive stationery is money well spent. There are a good many substantial business concerns using letterheads which are as much out of place in the modern letter file as an ox cart on a busy highway, just because the design was considered the height of elegance back in the century when the business was founded. Some men design their own letterheads, and do a poor job. Others endeavor to economize and use paper so flimsy that it conveys an impression of inferiority and cheapness.

When you pick up a letter for the first time, it makes either a favorable or an unfavorable impres-

sion upon you, before you read even the first line. The quality of the paper, the character of heading, the color of the ribbon, the clearness of the typing, the arrangement of the paragraphs upon the page, either incline you favorably toward reading the message the letter carries, or toward tossing it in the waste basket unread.

It pays to use good stationery, and employ capable stenographers, regardless of the class of prospects to whom you are writing, and it is advisable to keep on hand a supply of stationery which is of such quality that it carries with it an air of dignity and importance, on which letters of more than ordinary importance may be typed. A number of direct mail men have found that it is possible to secure a better than average percentage of returns by adapting their stationery to the prospect. One man tells how he increased the returns on one mail campaign, addressed to a list of bankers, from 12% to 38% of replies, by simply making a change in the style of stationery used.

He prepared an engraved letterhead on a large size of folded "wedding" stock. This letter sheet was folded twice and enclosed in a plain envelope to match, 8¼x5½ inches. Evidently the "out of the ordinary appearance" of this stationery secured more than the average share of attention from the bankers to whom it was mailed.

There seems to be a tendency among the business men of our country to use too many words on their

letterheads, rather than too few. The essential things are the name of the concern, the character of the business conducted and the location. The importance of showing the street address should not be overlooked. It seems that the post office employees do not have much time to devote to giving "directory service." The street address is especially essential for the small business concern; it should not be omitted even in the case of the more prominent business firms unless the firm has its mail delivered through a post office box. Recently I have had some letters returned to me marked "unknown," when addressed to firms of considerable prominence.

"Advertising" letterheads are quite largely used at this time and they are appropriate for certain classes of business, but there is always danger that when there is too much advertising on the letterhead it will tend to lessen the importance of the message in the mind of the reader. Where it is desired to accompany the letter with advertising matter, it is better, as a rule, to use the four-page type of letter, or enclose a folder.

Insist upon good printing—(letterheads, of course, may be printed, engraved, embossed or lithographed)—and good paper stock. In almost every city of any size there are good printers, engravers and lithographers, who will be able to give worth-while advice concerning the arrangement of your letterhead and the best method of reproduction. But don't be satisfied with something that fails to measure up to the

standard of the stationery used by the better business houses of the country, just because your printer happens to have poor artistic taste. And don't cling to an antiquated style of letterhead just because it was considered the height of good taste back in the days when the business was founded.

Are your letters being written with a wide margin at one side and a narrow one at the other? Is the right-hand margin raggedly uneven? Do they seem to tilt to one side or the other, because of a list of names that runs from the top of the sheet to the bottom on one side or the other? Is the blotched paragraphing bringing up too heavily on the left-hand side? Are the keys on the typewriters used by the stenographers filled up? Are they using ribbons so badly worn that the letters are difficult to read? Are your short letters being written at the top of an 8½x11 sheet, leaving a great desert of glittering white space below?

All seemingly but trifles, and yet trifles which play a considerable part in the impression which the correspondence going out from your firm makes upon the men and women who receive it.

From the standpoint of the physical appearance of a letter, sentences should not be too long, and yet a constant succession of short sentences gives the letter a jerky, uneven appearance.

Paragraphing is most important, not only because of the separation of subjects, or different phases of the same subject, but because a paragraph gives the

reader a chance to get his breath, as it were, and take a fresh start. But there should be some logical reason for paragraphing. If a letter is chopped up into a succession of short paragraphs, regardless of the sense of the letter, as George French says, "It makes the reader feel that the writer is performing jazz music on the ukulele."

When you open your morning's mail and run across a letter written on a good grade of paper, with a heading that is unusually neat and attractive, you involuntarily regard it with more respect and are inclined to give it a preferred share of your attention.

Good stationery, and a clean, properly-balanced, rightly-paragraphed letter are worth all of the cost involved, just as you can afford to pay the salesman who secures additional business, because of good appearance and attractive personality, a better salary.

Chapter XXI

How Merchants Can Use Sales Letters

SOME HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE RETAIL DEALER WHO SEEKS TO INCREASE HIS PROFITS

There are a good many business men who, while convinced that it would be well worth while to use sales letters, are at a loss as to the best way to go about it. They can not figure out just what they should say in their letters in order to get results. Often better results will be obtained by securing the help of some one with experience in the writing of letters, but many merchants find, through experimenting a little, that they can plan and write letters which are profitable.

When you start to write your letter, try and put yourself in the place of your prospective customers, and look at your goods, product, or service from their side of the fence. What do your prospects seem to value most in life? What can you say that will make them want to trade with you rather than with a competitor? How can you make them want the goods or the service you have to offer?

Instead of feeling that you are making a speech to a crowd of people, pick out some individual and write to him just as though you were talking to him across the counter. After you have finished, go over your letter and see if there are not a lot of unnecessary words you can cut out. More than likely you can rewrite your letter a number of times to advantage, but don't keep on revising until your letter is dead and lifeless. Better not revise at all than that.

Be sure of what you want to say before you start, and be sure that you have said just that when you are through. Forget about the rules for letter-writing. Don't write as you think some other man would do it. Don't try to copy the style of someone else. As Eytinge said, "Crawl into the envelope and seal the flap."

If you are depending upon special prices to sell your goods, then talk low price and why your goods are especially desirable at these prices. If you prefer to seek the patronage of those men and women who do not pay so much attention to price, then talk quality, style and exclusiveness. Use letters to announce the arrival of new goods, or to show prospective customers how some article will add to their comfort, happiness or well-being.

If you are unable to think of anything to say about your goods that your competitor can not say with equal truthfulness, talk superior service, or endeavor to create an attractive personality for your business. Make people want to trade with you be-

cause they like your letters and feel that it would be a pleasure to do business with you. Here is a suggestion along that line:

" 'Thank you' may be a snarl, a sneer or a supplication. It may express gratitude, friendliness, appreciation, or it may be a parrot-like repetition of a meaningless phrase. Did you ever hear one of our boys say it?

"There are ten places downtown in Bradenton which sell cigars and confectionery. The statistical sharks would figure that we have only one chance in ten, at the most, of selling you your 'smokin's'—if you smoke—or the candy that is so much relished by the female of the species. But the fact is we are willing to let the other fellows do the 'selling.'

"No one will try to 'sell' you anything when you come into our store, but neither will you have to stand around waiting for some salesman to make up his mind that you probably came in because you wanted something. A satisfied customer means more than a sale to us. And so far as we know, there has never been a customer of ours who didn't feel that he got full value for every cent he left in our cash register.

"Notice that smiling countenance up in the left-hand corner? That's Bill Brown. Bill is one of the reasons why business is good with us. He's smiling because he has at last found a little 'de-vice' in the way of a cigarette lighter that works—not once in a while, but all the time. Come in and make him prove it.

"You probably wouldn't 'walk a mile for a Camel,' but we believe you won't object to walking,

or riding, a few blocks to trade with our boys if 'they satisfy.'"

There are firms which supply small copies of photographs at low cost. In this letter you use a picture of Bill Brown. In succeeding letters you can include one of yourself and other members of your sales force.

While perhaps the retailer does not have as many opportunities for using letters to advantage as does the manufacturer, letters should always be given an important place in his advertising program. Many stores have found that they can achieve an individuality in letters not possible in newspaper advertising. It is possible to use letters effectively in advertising a special sale, prices or service, without giving competitors advance notice of your plans.

Those merchants who handle goods which can only be sold to a certain percentage of the population, find letters and other forms of direct mail advertising especially valuable, since through this medium their advertising goes directly to those men and women they know to be prospective customers.

The merchant who is located well away from the business center of his city can seldom profitably use newspaper advertising because of the large percentage of waste circulation. But, at a comparatively low cost, he can reach every possible customer within his trade territory with letters, circulars and folders.

Goods are not actually sold until they are paid for—some merchants say they are not sold until the

customer is satisfied. It is natural to suppose that a retail store would value most highly their cash customers, but evidence is plentiful that most stores extend more favors to their credit customers. I have often heard men, who do all of their buying on a cash basis, complain that they never receive from the stores with which they trade a letter, offering the opportunity of selecting goods in advance of the opening date of a sale. In fact, they seem to be ignored in the distribution of direct mail advertising.

It is a fact that the mailing lists of many retail establishments is made up from their charge accounts, in the face of the fact that a certain percentage of their business—and possibly their most profitable business—comes to them in the form of cash sales.

Most people do not object to giving their name and address when making a cash purchase of any consequence, and in those cases where delivery is to be made this information is necessary. Those merchants whose mailing lists include only their credit customers are neglecting some of their best sources of business.

Undoubtedly one of the most profitable uses the retailer can make of letters is to employ them to keep in touch with his customers—whether cash or credit customers—in a way that will make them feel that their custom is appreciated.

Every store has on its books the names of a number of "inactive customers"; men and women who have not bought for some time. Some people are so

constituted that, when they feel they have been unfairly or unjustly treated, they will not make a complaint, but simply discontinue trading with the store so offending. The right kind of letter will often uncover the cause of complaint and lead to a resumption of friendly relations.

Among the inactive customers are always a good many people who have drifted away for no particular reason, and a cordial letter or two, calling attention to the different ways in which your store is prepared to be of service to them, will put many of these men and women back on the list of active customers.

A class of prospects often overlooked are the children. A child is not only a prospect for future sales, but has considerable influence upon the purchases of his parents. A letter addressed to a list of children will often win their friendship. There is no better example of persistence than the small boy who sets his heart upon something and is firmly convinced that he will never be happy until he gets it.

A letter, with a small gift, when a child is born helps make loyal customers. Many merchants have found it profitable to arrange to keep a record of birthdays and mail out a reminder letter, with suggestions for suitable gifts.

Many firms find it profitable to write letters to their dealers, or to their customers, whenever it is possible to make mention of something that will be of interest to the party addressed. Trade magazines and newspapers are glanced through by someone as-

signed to that duty, and whenever a customer is mentioned the item is clipped and turned over to a correspondent. If John Jones is made Master of his lodge, he receives a letter of congratulation. If Tom Smith is in an automobile accident, he gets a letter of condolence. If Bob Brown changes jobs he is written a letter wishing him success.

Retailers often arrange to secure the names of families moving into their city and write a letter of welcome. Furniture and house furnishing concerns have a good opening for a letter when it is announced that Mr. So and So has contracted for the building of a new home. The right kind of letters leave a warm feeling in the hearts of the proud parents of a new baby. Birthday and wedding anniversaries offer the jeweler, the florist and the confectioner opportunities for reminder letters. Such letters as these possess the element of timeliness in the highest degree.

Here is a letter sent by a firm handling Oriental rugs:

"You have attained life's ambition by buying your home. While your home is being made ready to move into you are constantly planning on furnishing it so as to be your 'Home Beautiful.'

"We do not know of any furnishing that will add as much to beautifying your home as Oriental rugs. Sometime soon, tomorrow if possible, won't you come to our store and investigate for yourselves? You will find here an array of captivating creations fresh from the Orient; and—a confidential whisper—the cost is less than you think!"

Chapter XXII

Making More Sales Through the Mails

ELEVEN SUGGESTED WAYS TO BUILD BIGGER BUSINESS FROM PRESENT PROSPECTS

The time of many correspondents is entirely taken up with the task of replying to letters received, but others work along sales promotion lines, seeking out ways and means through which letters can be written that will assist in building up business for their employers.

Here are some suggestions as to letters which may be written to customers, or prospective customers, building up good will or seeking to make sales. The complete letter is not given—just enough to start the mind of the dictator working along certain lines.

1. Letter to a merchant who bought a bill of goods at one time, but has not been heard from directly since:

"It is said that silence is sometimes very eloquent, but to save our lives we can't figure out just what it is your silence is saying to us.

"On June 12th our salesman, Oscar Wilmuth, sent us in a nice order from you. We did a lot of rejoicing over that order. We selected the goods with especial care, packed them securely and got them away to you with a little more than the usual promptness. And then you dropped off the map completely, so far as any more orders were concerned. Wilmuth has been to see you once or twice since, but his reports simply state, 'no sale.'

"There's a reason, of course. Will you tell us what it is? We have an idea that we can give you more reasons why you should buy ..... than you can give us why you shouldn't. Is it a bet? Here are a few of our reasons now:"

2. Letter to a customer that is not giving the firm as many orders as he should, considering the volume of business he is doing:

"The Business Review states in the February issue that you did a half-million dollar business last year. Hearty congratulations! This is certainly a wonderful record.

"We know where you spent $1,543.00 of this half million, but we are just plain curious as to the balance of it. During 1928 you purchased from us the following goods (here list items):

"I wonder if we have been negligent in telling you that we manufacture a number of other items, each considered a leader in its line? Just for instance, take our ....."

3. Letter to a man who requested catalog and prices and who was put on the mailing list, but has not ordered:

"Seven shots and not a hit yet! Either we are using the wrong ammunition, we are extraordinarily poor shots, or we have been aiming at something 'what ain't.'

"We have written you seven times, following up the catalog and price list you requested on March 15th. That's no reason why you should send us an order. The plain fact is that we have failed to convince you that you will profit through buying from us. But WHY?

"We have no desire to furnish filling for your waste basket, nor to annoy you with information that is not desired. Will you just come right out and tell us frankly what's wrong with our goods or our prices—*from your viewpoint?* Or is it that you are simply not in the market just now for goods such as we manufacture?

4. Letter acknowledging order from a new account:

"You are most heartily welcome as a new member of our large and rapidly growing family. While we want all of the new business we can get, we always put the most emphasis upon taking proper care of our customers.

"You are now a 'customer' and so entitled to the same consideration as the man who has been on our books for many years. We know that in order to retain you as a customer you must realize a profit on the goods you buy from us and we are ready to extend you every possible cooperation along that line. In order to give you an idea as to the kind of cooperation we offer, here are a few of our sales promotion plans:"

5. Letter following up request for catalog:

"Has our catalog reached you yet? We are eager to have you look it over, because we are sure you will find in it those articles in which you are most interested at this time.

"Please do not regard this as 'just another catalog,' but as a reliable source of information with regard to the goods which it lists. You will note that many of the articles are shown in their natural colors and that each one is described with so much detail that you can order with the same assurance of knowing exactly what you are going to get, as if you ordered from a sample.

"Read pages 23 and 24 carefully and you will understand why we are able to give such splendid values. Just as an example, take our ..... on page 72 . . ."

6. Letter sent out in advance of salesman's call:

"Here's a new one. 'There was a Scotchman who . . .'

"The old time drummer used to consider one of his chief functions to be the retailing of all of the latest stories to the merchants upon whom he called. The salesman of today has stories to tell, too, generally stories of new goods, attractive prices, special offers, ways and means of increasing business.

"We are full of enthusiasm over the story of how we have stolen a march on our competitors by putting out the neatest, fastest-selling.....

"But we will let Charlie Mitchell tell you *this* story. He will get around to your place about March

1st. It will pay you to hold up on your orders until he gets there."

7. Letter to customer the salesman reported "not in:"

"Where were you last Saturday, the 14th?

"None of our business, of course, but we are honestly sorry you were not in when Charlie Mitchell called at your place of business. He had some samples of new goods that we know you would have been interested in seeing. We know that you are the kind of merchant who likes to keep a few jumps ahead of his competitors and these ..... of ours strike a new note, which is sure to make a strong appeal to the womenfolk.

"You will want to get some of these ..... in stock before Charlie gets back again, so we are enclosing a descriptive folder, and here is the special introductory offer we are making:"

8. Letter to secure business from territory it is not profitable to cover with a salesman:

" 'Good morning, Mr. Jones. I represent Bishop Brothers, manufacturers of aluminum ware. Will you give me just a few moments of your time in which to tell you why a lot of your customers are going to buy aluminum cooking vessels this year?'

"I surely wish that I could walk into your store some morning and greet you something after that style, but since that is not possible, the next best thing is to get acquainted through letter. I want you to regard me as a friend, no matter whether you buy anything from us or not. I want you to feel that I

am here to serve you and that you can always depend upon my considering your interests as well as those of my firm. I know that the only way I can hope to do business with you is to show you how you can make some money on the goods we have for sale.

"Just as I remarked in the first paragraph, I ask a few moments of your time to tell you why you can sell a lot of aluminum ware this year. Here's why:"

9. Letter to introduce a new product:

"Some merchant in Blankburg is going to make some good money this year through the sales of Electromaid. After an investigation we are convinced that you are the man we want to take over the sale of this new invention in that territory. We are confident you will want to take it on because it represents a forward step as great as that when the vacuum sweeper supplanted the broom.

"Can you think of anything which would make a stronger appeal to the housewives of your city than an electrically-operated machine, which will do quickly and efficiently a half-dozen tiresome tasks? Here are the jobs the Electromaid will handle:"

10. Letter to build good will and pave the way for future sales:

"The other day John Jones, of Lockwood—John has been buying groceries from us for fifteen years—wrote in inquiring if we knew where he could get a first-class bird dog.

"We helped John find his dog, and the thought occurred to us that there might be some other merchants in this neck of the woods we could help find some-

thing they wanted. Of course, we would like to sell you your groceries, but we want you to know that we will be glad to be of service to you in any way, at any time, regardless of whether you ever buy anything of us or not.

"The quality of the goods we handle and our consistently low prices have brought us a lot of customers, but it's the kind of service we give that holds our trade. About the only way we ever lose a customer is when he goes out of business.

"Sounds a little like bragging, perhaps, but some day you are going to try us out with a sample order or two, and then we will have a chance to show you what 'service' means in this establishment.

11. Letter following up lead supplied by salesman:

"In a letter received from Charlie Mitchell, following up his recent call on you, he said, 'The largest and best store in Lockton, run by two energetic young men. Stock well displayed, clever advertising, sales people courteous and efficient. But they are putting emphasis on price, rather than on quality.'

"Charlie never thought of our telling you of this report of his, but we know you will understand he was not criticising your methods, but simply trying to explain to us his reason for failing to get an order from you.

"We will say frankly that this report makes us all the more eager to have you handle our line. Though you do rely chiefly upon low prices in building up your business, there must be a number of your customers who have a tendency to want the best, even if it does cost just a little more. You will agree with us,

we know, that there never was a time in the history of our country when the people, as a whole, paid so much attention to quality. They are no longer contented to accept anything they are offered because it is cheap.

"You are not selling 'cheap goods.' We know that. But you must be losing trade because you are not carrying that class of merchandise demanded by certain of the people of your city. Why not select a small assortment from our line—goods on which your profit will be large—and try them out? How does this assortment strike you:"

Chapter XXIII

Fifty "Dont's" and "Do's" for Dictators

SUGGESTIONS THAT WILL HELP YOU
IN HANDLING THE MORNING MAIL

Don't—

—put off your dictation until you are compelled to hurry too much to get through, and it is too late for the stenographer to give transcription the proper care and still get the letters out the same day.

—allow a careless stenographer to mar the appearance of a good letter by poor spacing and erasures.

—mumble, hesitate and repeat in your dictation, and then blame the stenographer because she doesn't "get it right."

—fire a verbal bombardment at your stenographer, without pause or paragraph, and expect her to turn out an accurate transcription, properly arranged and punctuated.

—give your stenographer a general idea of what you want to say and let her compose replies to letters in accordance with her views of what is

right. She can play a lively tune on her typewriter, but you are supposed to supply the words.

—let your mouth utter mechanical phrases while your thoughts wander over the golf links or along a trout stream. A man can talk without thinking but writing a business letter is "something else yet." If you are not interested yourself how can you expect your prospect to be?

—take up your day's mail with the feeling that you are facing a disagreeable task, which must be disposed of as quickly and painlessly as possible.

—think of the men and women to whom you are to write as somehow "inferior;" that they are purposely unreasonable in their requests; that you can always judge from a letter whether the writer is a prospect for your goods or not.

—think too much of how you can "sell" a prospect, nor talk too much about *your* interests. Consider how you can best serve him.

—write in such a manner as to give the reader the impression that you feel you are quite a bit wiser and better informed than he is, nor volunteer information with which the average person is well acquainted.

—give offense by expressing decided opinions on religion, race, politics, or on any question which might arouse the antagonism of the reader.

—indulge in humorous remarks which have no connection with the subject under discussion;

nor quote jokes which might possibly be offensive to the reader.

—forget that if your opening paragraphs are devoid of interest your letter will most likely not be read.

—take three long paragraphs to say what could be more forcefully expressed in one.

—write so that the reader will find a meaning in your letter which you did not intend to convey.

—knock a competitor's goods or service.

—try to convey too many ideas in one letter.

—write "over the heads" of your prospective purchasers.

—start to answer a letter until you have read it carefully and know just what information is desired by the writer, nor leave any of his questions unanswered.

—start to dictate a letter with no logical plan as to method of handling and no definite idea of what you are going to say.

—use obsolete or unfamiliar words, half-page paragraphs, long, involved sentences, nor antiquated, worn-out phrases.

—write a long letter when a short one will serve the purpose better. A long letter discourages reading.

—approach every letter from the same angle or handle all types of prospects alike.

—endeavor to force a reply to your letters by the expression of disappointment, impatience or anger.

—fail to provide terminal facilities in every letter you write. Make up your mind what you want the prospect to do; make it clear to him what you are asking him to do; make him feel that it is to his interest to do it; make it as easy as possible for him to do it.

Do—

—Arrange to take care of your dictation as early in the morning as possible when your brain is clearer. If there are some letters in the morning's mail which require investigation and study, lay them aside until after you have disposed of the bulk of your correspondence.

—See that your stenographers understand the standard style of spacing on the page, paragraphing, arrangement of salutation and signature; that all letters turned out measure up to the adopted requirements, and are neat and attractive in appearance.

—Read over the correspondence to be answered before you start to dictate; make up your mind as to the best way of handling each letter; get your thoughts in order—then dictate in a clear, understandable voice. If you can not depend upon the stenographer to paragraph and punctuate properly, indicate your wishes in this respect as you dictate. If a dictating machine is used, the indication of punctuation marks and paragraphs is especially important.

—Insist upon a correct and accurate transcription

of your dictation. Cooperate with your stenographer by endeavoring to express your thoughts in a clear, concise manner, so that it will not be necessary to call for rewrites when you read your letters over for signature.

—Give your personal attention to every letter to be answered. It is all right to use a form for answering a number of letters practically identical in subject matter, but get your knowledge of the business, your understanding of human nature, your personality, into the letters that go out over your signature, or that of the firm.

—Concentrate your thoughts upon the work in hand. Keep in mind that the letters you write will be regarded as representatives of your firm; that every letter written offers the opportunity for selling or assisting in the sale of goods, and in winning the friendship of possible customers.

—Try to answer every letter in a way that will build good will and increase the prestige of your firm. Remember that the days's dictation will result in the loss or gain of money by your employers. Nothing will do more toward making your letters effective than the reflection in them of your faith, loyalty and enthusiasm.

—Remember that your letters establish contact between you and other human beings whose actions are inspired by emotions. Write *to* your prospect, not *at* him. It is not always safe to judge a man by appearances; it is possible to lose much

good business by discourteously or inadequately replying to letters which are carelessly written or betray a lack of education. No matter if you receive a letter which is written in a crude, offensive manner, make your answer courteous and helpful.

—Always emphasize what your goods or service will do for the prospect. Assume the "You" rather than the "We" attitude. Try and understand how the man or woman to whom you are writing will look at your goods or your service; how you can help gratify their desires or satisfy their needs.

—Endeavor to talk the language of the men and women whose letters you answer. Remember that no one likes to be addressed in the tone you would use in giving information to a child. Write in such a way as to make the reader feel you regard him as a man of intelligence and ability.

—In every letter you write endeavor to start from some point at which you know you and your correspondent are at agreement and lead him from there along the path you would have him follow. Carefully avoid saying anything which might give offense.

—Write in a cheerful, optimistic tone. A man is not likely to buy anything when he is depressed, dejected or discouraged, but he will feel kindly toward anyone who helps in banishing the gloom.

Paint a bright picture of what your goods will do for him.

—Start your letter off in a way that will get attention and make the reader feel that you have something to say which will be of interest. While some dictators devote too much space to getting attention and not enough to selling, a long, dull, pointless first paragraph will considerably lessen the chances of your letter being read.

—Express your thoughts in as few words as possible. The man who has the greatest flow of language is not necessarily the most effective correspondent. Clearness is not attained through the use of many words, but the most forceful and meaningful ones.

—Be sure that you do not dictate a reply to a letter in such a way that the reader will be puzzled as to just what you mean. Dictate so that there will be no chance for misunderstanding. Think how what you are saying will sound to the reader of your letter and what impression it will make upon him.

—Emphasize those features of your goods or service you feel will make the strongest appeal to the type of prospect to whom you are writing. You can point out wherein your product excels competitive products without mentioning names, indulging in boasting, or evidencing envy or apprehension.

—Realize that it often takes a number of letters to

accomplish your purpose, and that some strong appeals should be "soft pedaled" in your first letter that they may be featured in later ones. The average man or woman is generally confused by the attempt to grasp too many ideas at one time and better results will be obtained by hammering one or two points home, then following up later with others.

—Remember that if you habitually dictate as though you were addressing an audience of "highbrows," only the "highbrows" among your prospective customers will fully grasp your meaning, but if you write as you would talk to "the man on the street" you will reach both the "highbrow" and the "lowbrow," as well as the thousands who come between these two extremes. While there are times when only a long word will correctly express your meaning, short words are forceful and there is no chance of their being misunderstood.

—Be sure you are giving the writer of a letter the information he desires, instead of telling him what you think he should know. In the rush to turn out as many letters as possible during the day, many dictators fail to read over the correspondence to be answered carefully, much less give the more important letters the study which is essential in "sizing up" a prospect and deciding upon the best manner of approach. Too many letters leave the reader wondering just why

they were written and what they were intended to accomplish.

—Always decide definitely what you want to say before you start to dictate. Plan your letter from approach to farewell. Practice will enable you to do this quickly and without conscious effort. Make up your mind where you are going before you start, and then go there by the shortest and most direct route.

—Resolutely banish from your mind those phrases which have been handed down from generation to generation of correspondents, of which a classic example is, "Your favor of the 5th inst. received and contents noted." Try to express your thoughts in your own language, or that of the prospect. It is not possible to constantly find new ways of expressing a thought, but you can avoid the "canned" phrases which some dictators continually serve to their readers.

—Say everything that should be said in properly replying to a letter, no matter how many pages it takes. If you are giving a man the information he requested, without unnecessary words, he is not going to feel that your letter is too long, no matter how long it is. Even where you are not replying to a letter, the man to whom you are writing will not object to reading a long letter, if it treats of a subject of interest to him and in an interesting way. Be brief, but not too brief.

—Remember that, while a dozen letters in the

morning's mail may ask for practically the same information, that is not sufficient reason for replying to each of them in the same words. Some of these letters may contain something which will enable you to size up the writer to some extent and write a more personal reply than would otherwise be possible. A good salesman varies approach in accordance with the personality of his prospect and the dictator should do the same, so far as may be possible.

—Always dictate replies to letters from the viewpoint that the "customer is always right," no matter what your feelings may be. This does not mean that you should deviate from the policies of your firm, but you should learn to say "No" in a way to make the man to whom you are writing feel that there is no one else in the world to whom you would rather say "Yes." It is possible to be firm without being curt, harsh, discourteous or offensive.

—Dictate every letter so that it will, in some way, advance the interests of the firm. Never let a letter go out over the signature of the firm which is calculated to leave an unfavorable impression upon the reader. It is possible to get a sales message of some kind into a letter upon almost any subject. Above everything else see that your letters are permeated with the spirit of service. If you can't make immediate sales, make friends.

Chapter XXIV

"How Can I Write Better Letters?"

PUTTING INTO DAILY PRACTICE THE LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED

You bought this book because you wanted to write better letters and felt that it would help you to do so; or, you were handed this book by someone who considered it important that you should write better letters, and believed that you COULD write better letters.

Will you?

It all depends on how much importance you attach to the ability to write good business letters; the degree to which you are able to concentrate your thoughts upon this subject; and the amount of effort you are willing to put forth in making practical use of the "education" thus acquired.

The word "educate," you know comes from the Latin word "educto," which means to educe, to draw out, to "*develop* from within." All that this or any other book can do is to outline the fundamental principles which govern the writing of good business letters. The actual writing thereof is strictly up to you.

If you become a writer of better business letters, it will be of your own volition—because your will to write better letters is sufficiently strong to induce you to persistently and consistently practice the writing of business letters—better business letters than you are now writing.

One of the precepts of major importance is "Be yourself." Do not attempt to improve your "style" by imitating or copying the style of some writer you especially admire. It is true that some imitations are hard to distinguish from the original—but they can never be anything but imitations. The parrot is a good imitator, but few people enjoy conversing with one. It should be your earnest endeavor to acquire a style of your own—acquire the facility of writing letters of so much individuality that folk would know they came from you, even though you omitted your signature.

The fly in the ointment where a man lifts a letter, paragraph or sentence from its frame, and places it in a setting of his own, is that it never "fits" exactly; it always seems a little out of place. Even in letters it is often noticeable when a man is pretending to be that which he is not—when he is clothing his thought in the words of some one else, or claiming as his own, thoughts which belong to some one else.

Search the letters that come your way for ideas which you can adapt to your own use. It is even advisable to take some of the words and make them

your own through adoption. But, in the language of school days, "Don't be a copy cat."

Precept No. 2 is that you must think and believe that it is possible for you to write better business letters. We learn to do by doing. When we read a particularly fine letter, story or business article, we gain an impression from the ease and fluency by which the writing is distinguished that but little effort had been required on the part of the writer. It is true that writing comes easier for some men and women than for others, but there is at least as much truth as poetry, in the saying that inspiration comes through perspiration.

For the majority of men, writing is work. For many it is a tedious and toilsome process. Many authors revise and rewrite and revise again. Sometimes inspiration comes before the actual task of writing is started, but often it must be dragged up from the depths by the hair of the head. Often many paragraphs are ground out before the mental engine catches a spark and forges ahead at full speed. The dictator can not wait long for inspiration, nor do much revising, but do not despair because your mind seems almost destitute of ideas when you pick up a sheaf of letters for reply. Concentrate your thoughts upon the first letter at hand, try to get a mental picture of the man to whom you are to write,—and start dictating. Enthusiasm is the best of all "self-starters." If you can generate a little enthusiasm,

the chances are that you will soon find your thoughts galloping ahead of your words.

How are you going to get rid of the bad habits which cut down the effectiveness of your business letters? By replacing them with good habits. Professor William James, of Harvard, has worked out a formula for the acquiring of good habits. Here are the five steps he recommends, with some comment on their application to letter-writing:

1. Launch out immediately upon the new path you decide to take.

If you read books and articles on the writing of better letters and then lay them aside, with the thought that some day you are going to put what you have learned into practice, you will not make any progress. Tomorrow, you know, is always a day ahead. Today—NOW—is the time to start. Apply what you have learned to the very next letter you write.

2. Suffer no exception to the new method until it is a part of your life.

Habits wear deep paths in our minds. It is so much easier to let our thoughts travel along these old paths than it is to force them along new and untrodden ways.

All of us are naturally indolent and inclined to avoid mental effort. We may detect a certain outstanding fault in our letters and decide to eliminate it. For several days we make a special effort to carry out our newborn resolution, and we write better let-

ters. Then our enthusiasm wanes and we slip back into the old habit once more. The only way to conquer a bad habit in writing is to resolutely eliminate it from every single letter we write.

3. Deliberately seize every opportunity to practice the new methods.

If you feel that the suggestions in this book, and in others which you read, will help you to write better letters, then you should lose no opportunity for putting these suggestions into practice. Don't apply them to an occasional letter, but to everything you write. Don't be content to confine your writing to your daily dictation. Practice writing in your leisure moments and make your writing conform to those principles which you believe to govern the production of good letters.

4. Associate chiefly with those people who are doing the kind of thing you hope your new habits will help you achieve.

It will help you to join the local advertising club, if you have one; to associate with those men and women who are writing good letters, or who are striving to write good letters. It will help you to associate with the great authors through their writings. It will help you to keep a file of the good letters which come to you from time to time, and study them in an effort to ascertain just how they differ from the flood of common, ordinary letters which pass over your desk.

5. Once each day deliberately force yourself to do some task you ordinarily evade.

Just as the muscles in our arm are strengthened by exercising them, the will is strengthened by forcing ourselves to do something at which our spirit rebels. It is a fact that often a task which appears extremely difficult proves much simpler than we anticipated when once started. And the oftener a disagreeable task is performed, the easier it becomes to perform other similar tasks.

Don't dodge answering some particularly difficult letter by passing it on to some one else. Don't evade an issue by failing to answer your correspondent's questions frankly and squarely. And remember that the longer you put off a big job the bigger it is going to look to you.

If you get nothing else out of this book, I hope that you will become thoroughly convinced of the importance of writing a prospect in such a way that he can not help but grasp your meaning without effort. Try and get something into each of your letters that will "fit in" with the occupation or profession of your correspondent. Write about those things which you feel he is in the habit of talking about to his friends and fellow-workers.

And the best way to familiarize yourself with the problems, the language and the lives of various kinds and classes of men is to get out and mingle with all kinds and classes. The better you get to know your fellowmen, the more you will be able to humanize your letters.

How are you to know whether or not your letters

are showing an improvement? The best test of a letter is the results that it gets. But, some letters are not written with any idea of getting immediate, tangible results? True, but most of the letters you dictate are of such character as to at least permit of a reply. You can tell by the nature of the replies you receive as to how your letters are impressing your correspondents.

Undoubtedly there are men connected with your organization in whose judgment you have confidence. Submit carbon copies of some of your letters to these men for criticism.

Here is a suggestion which seems to me a good one: Write a letter to yourself occasionally. Never mind what your stenographer may think, dictate a letter to yourself today. Mail it out in regular order, and when it comes to you, put yourself in the other fellow's place and imagine just what his reactions would be upon reading such a letter. This is an especially good plan when you have received a particularly annoying letter and feel inclined to write a sarcastic reply.

You CAN write better business letters.

And you *are going* to do it, aren't you?